

The *Contender*

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Are You Discouraged?



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Oftimes when people are approached and questioned concerning their lukewarm condition dealing with their relationship toward God and asked if they don't realize they should not grow cold and indifferent, immediately one of these many excuses begin to be given: Oh, but preacher, if you

only knew this or you only knew that, you just don't realize what I have been through! You just don't realize what so-and-so said about me (or did to me)! I have searched the Bible and nowhere can I find one chapter or verse where justification can be given for any such statement, attitude or excuse. Such answers may well be our excuse, however, there is nothing in the word of God whereby you can base or substantiate such an excuse upon.

PAUL OVERCOMES TRIALS

Today let's examine the words of truly a spiritual man who knew firsthand all about being persecuted; who knew what it was to be talked about and unjustly mistreated and see what he has to say concerning such things. Yes, this man knew what it was to be flogged, stoned, run out of town, thrown in jail, placed in stocks and brought before courts simply because people thought he had done certain things. Through all this unjust

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do you find him making excuses to grow cold, indifferent or even turn back from his walk with God!

The text of our thought is taken from **Romans 8:28**. How often have we read this beautiful passage of scripture which has brought comfort to the hearts of saints through the ages and yet never ONCE do we notice the condition that verse hinges upon!! Many sermons have been preached on predestination and usually it is this particular verse of **Rom 8:28** used to launch the predestination study. However, the condition built into this verse seemingly is hardly ever mentioned! Therefore, let's begin reading **Rom. 8:28**, the Apostle Paul's statement made to the Roman church and as we do let us pay close attention especially to the condition hinging on the verse.

LOVE OF GOD PRIMARY FACTOR

And we know, Paul says, "**that all things work together for good to them that love God**". Now that is what the Bible says, however, this is how most people read it: all things work together for good to them who are predestinated. That is not what the Bible said! The Bible said all things work together for good to them WHO LOVE GOD or as one translation declares, THAT KEEPS ON LOVING GOD. To them (who love God) who are the called according to his (God's) purpose (or in accordance to God's great plan).

WHEN DO THINGS WORK FOR GOOD?

Therefore, please note, the primary objective or emphasis is placed heavily upon them who love God or keep on loving God. Christ remarks to the first church age (Ephesus) **Rev. 2:4** "**Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left or departed from thy first love.**" Continuing to speak to the first church age Christ says, "**Remember therefore from where thou art fallen and repent and do the first works or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick (lampstand or lightholder) out of its place except thou repent.**" We note as early as 96 A.D. the first gentile church age, because of certain obstacles in their pathway they had not been able to overcome, had already left or forsaken their first true, devout love for the word of God. Bear in mind, all things can only work together for good to them who love God as Paul declared in **Rom. 8:28**, certainly not unto those who have turned aside or rejected God's love! It is definitely this one condition of loving God which is built into this scripture that is the deciding factor whether or not all things are going to work together for good or whether all these things will be used for the elimination purpose of an individual!

TWO IMPORTANT THINGS

We are going to examine two very important things from the word of God (1) What does it scripturally require for an

individual to love God and (2) have we met that requirement whereby we know we REALLY and TRULY do love God? Jesus once declared in **Matt. 22:37-40**, the two greatest of the ten commandments of the law hinged on love when he said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and body and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The Word of God instructs us, above everything else, that we should love the Lord God with our entire being!

MAN'S LOYALTY

Remember, whatever a man loves is what you see him placing his whole heart into. Whatever a man loves, that is what you find his mind continually dwelling upon, it is what he is talking about and discussing every opportunity possible. It may be his wife, his home, family, children, automobile, church or it could even be his job. If a man loves his job more than he does God, you will find him more loyal to that job while being very disloyal in his attending the house of God to worship. Thus, when it falls the lot for the poor preacher to preach the man's funeral the preacher is placed between a rock and a hard place. No, no one is asking you to quit your job or become disloyal to your employer; nevertheless, we desire to examine this passage of **Rom. 8:28-29** in the light of eternal light because truly, we do not want to be lost. While on the other hand, there is more in this Christian life and serving God, growing in his grace, etc., than merely escaping hell. I am in this walk with God because according to **Rom. 8:28** there is

a definite plan of God for our daily Christian living. Living for God in this life is most joyful and filled with such peace, contentment, and happiness that it is worth every ounce of our strength to be dedicated in our service unto him.

GOD'S PLAN IN DAILY LIVING

It matters not what is laid in our pathway. If we will only examine those things that are placed there in the light of the word, we should know if we are spiritual at all and truly love God, sooner or later that very thing is going to work to our good. No, I certainly may not enjoy it. Whatever is laying there in my pathway may be very disgusting to me; nevertheless, if I will be faithful to the Almighty and stand true and I am really dedicated to God, that thing will work to my good and not to my ruination. However, were this thing laying there in my pathway to work unto my ruination, it is simply because I refuse to examine the situation or thing in the correct light. Because had I examined the situation, problem or thing correctly, I would have seen that it was working in God's plan for my life. Nevertheless, if I fail to examine it correctly and it causes me to miss the will of God and I am cast aside (**I Cor. 9:27**) then I cannot overlook the predestinated side of the picture; because, the fact remains that God knew before the foundation of the world that I wouldn't examine this thing placed in my pathway in the proper light. Therefore, that is exactly why he allowed or permitted it to be there in the first place,

to wash me out of the program and get rid of me.

LAW OF ELIMINATION

Whether you want to accept it or not, God does have a law of elimination. Within his program or plan which he originated before the foundation of the world affecting all mankind, the Almighty God will permit me to only play around just so long. It is possible he may even permit me to play around half of my lifetime;

however, one of these days he is going to grow tired of my



unconcernedness and when he does, I am going to have to arise, shake myself and realize God is through with me playing around. Therefore, something is definitely going to be placed in my pathway to now get rid of me. If I look at that thing with a mopey attitude, that may well be my last hour because that thing is no longer working for my good, it is now working to eliminate me! And from that day on I will continually grow worse, madder, more stubborn, more aggravated,

deader, until I finally reach the point I simply can't even be talked to or be dealt with and that will go on 'til my dying day and I am placed in the graveyard.

DIGGING SPIRITUAL GRAVE

See beloved, since I wasn't going on with God, he had to use some means or other whereby to eliminate me. Though he may tolerate me, allowing me to go on the rest of my natural life grumbling, complaining and bellyaching about everything, never once would I realize I was simply digging my own spiritual grave. How many times Satan will get us into a trap and there through our own grumbling, complaining, etc., make us dig our own spiritual graves and there die in it. Satan stands there gouging and probing us along saying, dig a little faster; therefore, we simply complain and grumble that much more and all the time we are getting further and further away from God. A perfect example of such a setting is shown or seen within that generation of Israelites who grumbled and constantly complained about everything that happened to them in the wilderness of sin (unbelief) while trying to make it to the Promised Land. Yes, because they failed to overcome the obstacles God Almighty placed in their pathway, obstacles which, had they loved God would have all worked for their good, instead it worked just the opposite. It worked for the elimination of every man and woman 20 years and older

amongst that great following.

Rom. 15:4 declares whatsoever things were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. **I**

Cor. 10:5 declared that God was not pleased with many;

therefore, he overthrew them in the wilderness. HOW? Through those very obstacles he placed in their pathway. Obstacles, which had they truly loved God, would have served as a molding and making of their character, instead the very thing which could have worked for the good in molding and making them there in the wilderness became the very process or means of elimination. Now these things, verse 6 declares, were for our example to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted, neither be ye idolaters as was some of them, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.



Israel Grumbling,
Murmuring
And Complaining
Against God
And Moses
Brings
Judgment.

Neither let us commit fornication as some of them did and fell 23,000 in one day. Neither let us put Christ to the test as some of them also tested him and were destroyed by serpents. Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer. I Cor. 10:8-10

WHAT FAILURE TO OVERCOME LED TO

Examining **Psalms 78** shows how quickly the children of Israel had forgotten his mighty works and mighty wonders which he had declared unto them, beginning with such marvelous things he accomplished in the land of Egypt then dividing the Red Sea causing them to pass through; leading them in the daytime by a cloud and by a pillar of fire at night; splitting the rocks in the wilderness to furnish millions a drink, causing water to run down like rivers, only to have them sin against the Almighty because they desired food of their choosing. **Psalms 78:19** declares, they spoke against God by saying, can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Knowing he had already smitten the rock and water gushed out; nevertheless they said, can he give bread also, can he provide flesh for his people? The Lord heard this grumbling and complaining and became angry, kindling a fire against Israel because she believed not in God and trusted not in his salvation after he had rained bread (manna) down from heaven for them to eat daily! **Psalms 78:25** testified man in the wilderness did eat angel food until they were full. God caused an east wind to blow into the heavens and by his power brought in the south wind and rained flesh upon them like dust and feathered fowls like the sands of the sea. He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their inhabitant so that they did eat and were filled for he gave them their desire. **Verse 30** declares, they were not estranged from their desire,

but while their food was yet in their mouths the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them down to the chosen men of Israel. For all this they had sinned still and believed not his wondrous works. That is all we will mention from **Psalms 78** concerning the disobedient nation of Israel who died in the wilderness simply because they could not overcome these obstacles God placed in their pathway. However, I encourage you to read prayerfully **Psalms 78** and as you do, think of **Rom. 8:28** and realize all this could have worked for Israel's good had they only loved God. Instead the very thing that could have worked for their good now turned and worked for their elimination.

WARNING TO CHURCH

Back to **I Cor. 10:8**. Neither let us commit fornication as some of them did and fell 23,000 in one day. Neither let us put Christ to the test as some of them also tested him and were destroyed by serpents. Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer. **I Cor. 10:11** shows these wilderness experiences were for our example. Now all these things happened unto them for examples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. After having given this declaration concerning Israel Paul declared to the church, wherefore let him that thinketh he stands take heed lest he fall. You see, **Rom. 8:28** could never have been applied to these people for their good seeing they did not

love God! Therefore, all these obstacles placed in the pathway of the children of Israel there in the wilderness after having left Egypt were used for a process of elimination! Moreover, had they not murmured and complained about these obstacles but only allowed them to become the necessary stepping stones needed to develop their character as God's chosen people, it could have easily been said that all these things laid in their pathway would have definitely worked for their good, instead of becoming their elimination in the program God.

OBSTACLES SERVE TWO PURPOSES

Therefore, I must remember in my Christian journey that all the things placed in my pathway can serve for one or two purposes: either they will work for my good or for my elimination. Within his program or plan, he allows me also to play around just so long (as he did Israel). He places objects in my pathway which if I look upon with a mopey, grumbling attitude, it may well be in my last hour of his program, because these very things which could have been used for my good will turn to eliminate me. And as I said before, like the children of Israel, I will from then on continually become worse, madder, more stubborn, more aggravated, deader, etc., unto my dying day! This is the means whereby God chooses to get rid of me. Why? Because in reality I never TRULY LOVED GOD!

CONFUSION OVER LOVE OF GOD

Many people are confused over this thing called the LOVE OF GOD. Certain people love their denomination thinking that is the love of God. Many love their pastor thinking that is the love of God. Some love a certain church doctrine believing that is the love of God. These things might be alright provided they are always kept in their proper place; however, none of these things are scripturally the love of God spoken of in **Rom. 8:28**. So often, beloved, these are the very things which usually stand between the individual and a true dedicated love of God.

GOD LOVERS KEEP COMMANDMENTS

What does it mean to truly love God? This is far more serious than most people realize. To love the Lord thy God according to **Matt. 22:37-40** means WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. **John 14:21** declares, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that (truly) loveth me. He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. The word commandments here does not refer to the Old Testament Ten Commandments, instead it refers strictly to the teachings and sayings of Jesus wherein he declares, if you love me you will keep my word. **John 14:23-24**, Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me he will keep my words and my father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings and the word which ye heard is not mine but the father's which sent me. **John 15:10** declares, if ye keep my commandments (words) ye shall abide in my love even as I kept my father's commandments (the great Eternal Spirit) and

(therefore) abide in his love. **Verse 14**; Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.

CHRIST OVERCAME EACH OBSTACLE

Keep in mind our thought of **Rom. 8:28** which declares all things work together for good to them who love God as we hear John declare in **I John 2:3-7**, howbeit, we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know that we are in him. **Verse 6**, he that saith that he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked (and remember Jesus overcame every obstacle placed before him in his earthly walk). Not one obstacle turned him aside from the route marked off that he should walk, thus no obstacle eliminated him from the program of God as it had the first Adam who, through his fall, led all mankind into sin and disobedience, calling for (Christ) the second Adam to come on the scene and rescue mankind from Satan's trap of death.

GOD LOVER CALLED INTO PLAN

What did the Apostle Paul mean when he stated, and we know all things work together for good to them who love God, called according to the Almighty's plan? Yes, whether it be money, job, church or whatever, Paul said all things work together

for good to them who love God. Christ said, if you love me keep my commandments. Remember, according to **2 Cor. 5:19, Isa. 9:6, I Tim. 3:16**, Christ was none other than the Old Testament God dwelling in flesh who declared, he that loveth me will keep my word or sayings. **DO YOU LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART?** If you do, you will keep his sayings and **ALL THINGS CAN WORK FOR YOUR GOOD**. And secondly, never forget, it is those individuals who do love God who are the people (in the first place) God has called into his divine purpose of plan.

CALLED TO BE RE-SHAPED

Now we must ask ourselves another question. What is God's purpose or plan in having called us? His purpose is, and please don't miss this, if I can correctly hear his call, obeying his word and receive true salvation, the new birth, etc., and if I can react in a proper manner whenever I am faced with these many things which will surely befall me in my Christian walk; if I am able to examine these things in the correct light and will always be able to say, yes father, have thy own way, while he is leading me through these obstacles then I know God's purpose has been, through it all, that one day I might be conformed, molded and shaped into the very likeness of Jesus Christ according to **Rom. 8:29**. Beloved, there is no such thing as God calling you and then simply giving you an easy chair, telling you to sit down. No, instead he says, I have called you because I desire to shape and remold you. And don't ever think while he is doing all this shaping and remolding he is going to inject you with a

hypodermic needle and put you to sleep whereby you will never know what he is doing. **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** You are definitely going to know what is taking place, especially if you have any spiritual life in you whatsoever. There just isn't any such thing as you not knowing what the grace of God is doing or accomplishing in your life. No, it won't be long until you will know, especially if you actually intend to travel God's provided route that he has chosen for you whereby one day you, through his grace, might be molded and shaped into the image of his dear son who was born of woman according to **Gal. 4:4**.

DISSATISFIED WITH FIRST BIRTH

God's purpose is that you and I of this fallen, depraved, human race, all of whom were born according to **Gen. 3** from the knowledge that the sex act could also be used for pleasure as well as being used strictly for the divine desired purpose of God in his plan, by which act he purposed to bring into the world sons and daughters who should all be born with eternal life (as was Christ) instead of being born as they are, full of deaths and disobedience. Therefore, because we were all born into the world full of death and disobedience in our bloodstream, contrary to God's will, it is God's divine purpose in his calling you who were born in such a pathetic condition to rebirth you according to **John 3:3-5**, remold and reshape you into the character and obedience of the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ himself who is the perfect anointed one, yet born also of woman, **Gal. 4:4**. Christ, you recall, was the only child born of woman, born of flesh that was born

in perfection. Yes, Christ was the only child ever conceived, produced according to the law or tree of eternal life, born completely and totally obedient to God's will. Therefore, God's desire is now to rebirth and remold you into the very image of the character and the principle as well as the nature that God is, who you recall was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Thus, we see that although the first Adam was not born of woman, the second Adam, the Lord of Glory definitely was and was born in perfection.

ENGRAFTING NEW NATURE INTO OLD

Thus God has willed in a certain capacity that those same attributes which were seen in Christ, attributes which made him submissive to the will of the father, might also be engrafted (**James 1:21**) and molded into us through rebirth by his Spirit wherein someday we, too, might also be Godlike in our character and in our nature as well as outlook. Beloved may I say, the kind of person Christ was is exactly the same kind of person each one of us would have been, provided our first parents (Adam and Eve) had only waited a little longer upon God allowing him to lead them unto the law or the tree of life whereby it, instead of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, could have influenced their first intimate relation, a relationship wherein all their children born from the sex act would have been filled with eternal life, obedience, goodness, etc. But no, instead the first couple chose, themselves, not to wait upon God to lead them unto the proper law which would have governed their relationship, a relationship which would

have been in perfect obedience to God's will, instead they allowed their first intimate relationship to be influenced or governed strictly by the law or tree of knowledge of good and evil, using their first act strictly for pleasure outside the divine will and purpose of Almighty God's plan for the producing of his human family. That one act of disobedience produced death into the bloodstream of the first couple, thus through the sex act strictly for pleasure outside the divine purpose of God passed on to each oncoming generation that which they had inherited through disobedience in the garden and fulfills the scripture wherein David declared that all of us came into the world speaking lies, etc., and again David declared his knowledge of what had actually happened in the Garden as he said in sin did my mother conceive me. Therefore, I was shapen in iniquity (**Psalms 51:5**).

NOT IGNORANT OF EVENTS IN GARDEN

David, as well as all Jews, were not in ignorance to what had happened in the Garden between the serpent and Eve as well as Adam, the son of God, and knew also that these two trees shown in the midst of the Garden certainly were not trees of vegetation life. Because, had sin and disobedience been obtained by partaking fruit from plant life, redemption would have also had to come the same route from eating plant life. The nature of the two trees had to be exactly the same.

One could not have been spiritual and the other natural.

CHRIST IN US OVERCOMES

Being born again through accepting Christ as our eternal life, we can begin to see how God intends to make us to become Godlike in our character, in our nature, in our outlook, etc., by placing all of his attributes in us. Furthermore, we will be able to see these things which are being placed in the pathway of our Christian walk, things which always seem to come against us in this life, have been the very route which God has chosen for us and through that Godlikeness (engrafted into us) that Christ will provide for us in our lives we can begin to say, it is not us actually doing the overcoming. Oh no, but as Paul declared when he said, it is not I, but Christ which liveth in me is gaining the victory daily. We are able, by these things and through the grace of God in us to overcome these obstacles and continue to grow and progress daily more in the likeness and stature of our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, that perfect man born of woman, our example, who personally overcame every obstacle placed in our pathway which leads to the fulfillment of **Rom. 8:28-29** causing all things to work for good to them who do (truly) love God who are the called according to his plan and purpose.

SEEING GREATER THINGS AHEAD

Beloved, don't ever think for a moment that Jesus our example, who is both Lord and Christ, and was born sinless into this world, lived a life free from all reproaches, free from all trials and free from opposition. No sir, he did not! In every wise that flesh man born of woman, the perfect Christ was tested and tempted in every manner as you and I (**Heb. 4:15**). Nevertheless, in order that he might become the perfect example for fallen mankind who had been born under the effects of the wrong tree in the Garden, he never once yielded to the effects of any of these temptations placed before him. No, instead Christ was able to see something that was far greater beyond this life which was to be gained through his obedience to the father's will which to him was far greater than having to endure the opposition and humiliation of all these obstacles placed in his pathway while here upon earth. Hebrews says Christ learned obedience through the things which he, in his flesh, suffered. What could Christ see that was so much greater? Christ, as perfect man, could see that exalted position which he, as man, would be lifted into.

SEEING FUTURE MAKES OBSTACLES LIGHTER

Beloved, that should also be the main objective, the main goal, as well as the main source of our vision, that through all trials, temptations, persecutions and troubles, we too, should look upon them and realize as Christ did, that Praise God this is not to our destruction, this is not to our ruination, but instead all these things are for the advantage

of our spiritual growth to work for our good, leading us to perfection in Christ. Therefore, it is no more I that liveth, as the apostle declared, it is Christ Jesus in Spirit form living in me who is doing the overcoming. Yes, it is no longer me through my physical efforts who is overcoming all these things, but it is the grace of God within me that gives me the victory over every trial, temptation, persecution and such which befalls my life. Hence, I can begin to recognize God's divine purpose or plan, how he (the great Eternal Spirit) desires and intends someday that I grow up into the full measure of the likeness of his Son, Christ, that perfect man, our example.

NATURE DEMANDS IDOL

Surely, if we are aware, placed within the carnal nature of every child growing up, is that instinct and desire to be like someone, why beloved, when we are rebirthed and come to Christ it is only natural that having been born from above the desire is to be like Christ. It is a desire placed within us by the Holy Spirit. There is no one greater anyone could ever pattern their lives after. When the Lord, the Eternal Holy Spirit sent his Son into the world (**Gal. 4:4**) he sent him (the second Adam) into the world in order that he might stand victoriously between the living and the dead, between Satan and death as well as stand against everything else which should ever arise that you would need to gain victory over throughout your entire Christian walk.

MORE THAN A CONQUEROR

Yes, he was more than a man. Christ was more than a means of refuge and escape for us to barely miss hell. I repeat, he wasn't something offered to this world whereby we would barely escape. Christ was more than an escape route; he was

more than something whereby each time you faced a trial as an obstacle which was laid in your path, that with a sigh of relief you might wipe your brow and say, thank God, I barely escaped. But the question remains, will I be able to escape the next trial which may be even more severe? No, thank God he is our victory over sin, over Satan, seeing the work on Calvary crushed the very power of Satan because John triumphantly declared the Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil (**1 John 3:8**). Then again, we hear John declare rejoicingly, greater is he that is within you (Christ in Spirit form) than he that is in the world (**1 John 4:4**). Beloved, that is why you don't barely escape the trap of Satan when you lean on the Lord Jesus. No, he is able to bring us victoriously and triumphantly over every trial, ever persecution, etc. Some people look upon eternal life so pathetically. Don't ever look at eternal life in that light. True, when you stand on the other side, you will be able to stand there only because it was made possible through the grace of God, seeing it was the merits of grace that allowed you the privilege to stand there. Yes, in that relationship you could say we did barely escape by a hair's breadth; because, it was Peter who declared, if the righteous scarcely be saved where will the sinner and ungodly appear (**1 Peter 4:18**). But that is dealing with the picture at the end of your life's journey showing how that grace and grace alone brought you through. That involves more than simply escaping hell, etc., that is lining you up for the job he has for you in the glorious hour

of that thousand years reign to come. You have escaped something in order to be placed in a relationship with God and Christ in order that you might become an heir of all things.

DO YOU LOVE GOD?

When we begin to recognize or realize that all things in this Christian life do work together for good to them who love God and are called for a definite purpose and I remind you that purpose only benefits those who do love God seeing those same obstacles you are to overcome can either someday make you like the Lord Jesus or can be used as an elimination process to get rid of you. Therefore, it behooves us to begin searching to find out whether or not we actually do love God. Because when we find out we do love God, then and only then will we be able to absolutely recognize and understand that all the rest Paul declared here will also tie into us because this scripture is speaking strictly unto those who love God. Therefore, each of us has to ask the question, DO WE REALLY LOVE GOD? Because if we really do love God, then we know all things will work together for good or to the advantage of them who love God. Many people as I said, are in love with their church, but not God; many love their pastor but not God. The Sunday school superintendent, the Sunday school teacher or a dozen other things which they have connected with religion yet, sad to say it is not God at all that they love because Jesus said, if you love me you will keep

my commandments and John declared his commandments, or words or sayings are not grievous. No, not to them who love God, the word is not grievous.

REMAINDER OF VERSES APPLY TO GOD LOVERS

Notice also how the remainder of these verses will apply strictly unto those who definitely love God. It is these who love God that we shall see have definitely been called according to His divine plan. His plan or purpose according to (**Verses 29-30**) is that for those whom He did foreknow He did also predestinate to be conformed in the image and likeness of his Son. Therefore, since God foreknew us (who love him) he knew before the foundation of the world to what end or what route he would choose to set before us whereby these things that we would definitely be brought face to face within his plan and purpose were the very things he himself had provided or chose to use in order to mold and shape us into the image of his dear son. While at the same time, these very same things would keep the sinner and man of the world strictly on the outside of the grace of God.

GOD'S PLAN BENEFITS GOD LOVERS

Therefore, having examined it in this light of understanding, we see according to verse 30 how he laid his plan out to benefit only those who would truly love him. Moreover, whom he did predestinate those are the ones through his spirit that he called, because unless the Spirit calls you or draws you in conviction power you cannot come unto him (**John 6:44**). Therefore, if the Almighty already knew

you in his foreknowledge back there before the foundation of the world where Paul in **Ephesians 1** declared he had counseled with himself concerning this great plan and program which would involve redemption for the human race and it was there as he saw our lifespan pass before him in his foreknowledge that he appointed you and I unto eternal life seeing all names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world and not the night you received his salvation (**Eph. 1:4, Rev. 13:8**). It was also back there in that foreknowledge of his that he designed certain things which were to confront you as you travel down through this lifespan of time. Yes, that one Eternal God who laid out all this through his foreknowledge and lined it out just for me and you is certainly one day in our lifespan going to reach out in the convicting power of the spirit and say to us who have been chosen (because he saw we would choose him). Come on and let's start your journey. Yes, sooner or later his grace is going to pull me into that pathway whereby I may begin to start walking with him. I will never forget the night I knelt at an altar in the Methodist Church and said Lord, if you will take away these cigarettes and give me a know-so salvation whereby I can know I am saved from my sins, I will do my best to teach your word. Not realizing at that hour that is exactly what he had already ordained for me to do. I knew the next day he had taken me at my word because I found myself with my Bible in hand and I read and read and read. From that day until the

day God led me into this endtime message and gave me the baptism of the Holy Ghost, I did not know what a trial or test actually was, that is, those trials and tests applicable to **Rom. 8:28**, which benefit those who love God.

DAY BATTLE BEGUN

In the early months of my salvation experience I lived with the feeling that the sin load had been lifted from my shoulders. I wasn't ridiculed and besides, I cared little what sinners thought about me anyway; therefore, I actually faced no real persecution. Yet, the day I received the Holy Ghost and my spiritual life began, that was the day the battles started. That was the day the devil got mad, yet that is the day I also realized I had something in my life that intended to take me through and that by no means should I turn back.

PREDESTINATED, CALLED AND JUSTIFIED

Verse 30 declares, moreover whom he did predestinate, those are the ones he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified (or looked upon as never having sinned). Where, beloved, was he doing all this? Before the foundation of the world of course! This is what all was going on through the foreknowledge of his great mind. Whom he called, them he also justified. Right there from then on it didn't make one bit of difference unto him what these had done in their lifespan of unbelief before his call should take place

in reality, because in the foreknowledge of his mind, he had already justified everyone of them which simply means he looked upon these as though they had never sinned. God foreknew them; therefore, in time to come, when that day would arise that God would actually lay his hand on that life, he called that soul to come and begin their walk with him. However, before the foundation of the world he had already seen them forgiven and justified. And because these are now called and justified, it is going to begin for them another battle, a new kind of battle with Satan. Sure, no one denies that even while you were living in the natural for the devil that you did not have battles. Of course you did. However, now that he has called you, new and different battles will arise with Satan, the accuser of the brethren.

SEEING OVERCOMERS, GOD JUSTIFIED THEM

For whom he called he also justified and, get this, back there before the foundation of the world in his mind, through his great foreknowledge he even saw those who loved God, those who overcame the persecution, hindrances, stumbling blocks, etc., and was eventually even made into the image of his dear Son. He saw you in a glorified state of being because the scripture says whom he justified, them he also glorified, meaning in his mind God saw the end or the finish of your route of life that he had already chosen for you, an note, he saw you glorified. This shows he saw you finish the end of your race as you ran it with patience, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith, **Heb. 12:1-2**. He sees you already glorified, already

immortal. And at that moment when he saw all this, naturally speaking, you were not even born. No, there was not even a planet created for you to live on. There was not even dust on that planet to furnish you your body. There was not even an angel created at that moment.

SHORT LIFE - MAKE IT COUNT

Seeing that is the way God looks upon us who love him, Paul says we already know that all things work together for good to them who do love God. There isn't one thing that can befall your Christian life but what sooner or later it will work to the good; however, if you don't love God then that same thing is going to absolutely work in the other direction to eliminate you and get you out of the way. Believe me, I don't say that because I want to see God eliminate anyone; nevertheless, it is merely a fact that we can't always play with God. Your life is too important. You today who have been destined with only 70 years should make each one of those years count by asking yourself, just where do I fit in the plan of God, where do I fit in his will? Were he to come tonight for me, am I ready to face him?

NO ONE CAN CONDEMN GOD'S ELECT

Thus, as we begin to see God's plan unfold for those who love him, (we hear Paul continue this line of thought in **verse 31** by asking a question, what shall we say to these things, if God be for us (who love him) who then can be against us). And I ask you that question. Is there a person in this world who can keep you from living

for God? No, there isn't one soul. If you don't live for God it is your own fault. Scripturally, you can't blame anyone else yet someone will say, oh, but you don't know how bad I was tempted. And to that individual Paul would say, there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation, also make (the) way of escape that ye may be able to bear it (**I Cor. 10:13**). Thus we see God leaves us completely without an excuse. If you don't want to live for God, IT IS YOUR OWN FAULT! No one else can be blamed. Therefore, don't ever say so-and-so said such-and-such and that caused me to fall by the wayside. No, the Bible won't back that up. You are the one who said it that way, not God. It is a fact whether you want to admit it or not. You are only looking for a reason or excuse and the Bible won't provide you with one. You are simply looking for a way out without admitting the fact you simply DON'T LOVE GOD! If you loved God more than anything else, there isn't one thing according to Paul's following statements that is in this whole wide world that could keep you from him. If you love God, you are not going to allow anything to interfere, that is what the scripture just finished declaring. That is why Paul said to the church, the born again, those who love God, what shall we say to these things, if God be for me who in the world can stand in my way? In **John 10:26-33** we hear Jesus declaring from the temple in Solomon's porch unto the Jews who

had no spiritual ears to hear what the spirit was saying in that hour, you believe not simply because you are not of my sheep. As I said unto you, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they (MY SHEEP) shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, my father who gave them to me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand. I and my Father are one. They knew what he meant because the same group who was not his sheep and could not hear his voice picked up stones to stone him because they said, you being a (mere) man hath made yourself God.

TRIALS PROVE LOVE FOR GOD

Who can actually stand in your way? Nobody! Though I grant you, in a sense, people can get in your way; nevertheless, if you truly love God you will find a way through all that mess. God will help you through it. Now the only way God is going to be for me (according to **Rom. 8:31**) is if I am for him. It is every bit possible he may let us wait a little while, yet that is only to allow us to see our own determination in our stand for him because God already knows whether or not if we will stand. WE DON'T! Nevertheless, if we will only stand and by our stand show we are really for God, then he is going to hear our prayer and assist us. On the other hand, I could allow the same thing to stop me. I could be saying, well I would like to be serving God but you see what it is that is in the way;

therefore, I would sit down and not serve God. Really, that is the thing proving I didn't love God to begin with! Then maybe six weeks or six months later I might undertake a task which would seem to be impossible; however, if that task is something that fits the flesh person or carnal, I might spend a fortune to get it done, but God wouldn't be in it.

IS GOD FOR YOU?

If God be for us, Paul said, who can stand against us? Let us ask ourselves the question, is God actually for us? You can only answer that by examining your own heart. If you really love God with all your heart then he loves you and is going to take your side. **Verse 32**, He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all (the church **Eph. 5:25**). Christ was an example for me personally. How shall he not with him also freely give us all things. Look what God is doing to his Son, three days after death raised him from the dead and 40 days later lifted him into glory where he seated this perfect, tried man (the Christ) on the right hand of majesty, where glory, power and honor was bestowed upon him that he should be a king, worshipped and adored by angels.

REWARDED FOR CROSSING EACH BARRIER

Therefore, seeing Christ was our example, look at what he received for his obedience in crossing over every barrier and obstacle laid in his pathway. As the scripture says, learned he obedience

through the things he suffered as he was an example for us personally, how much more through him who is now in us coming along that very same route (the route of humility, scorned, ridicule, etc.,) following in the very same footsteps of him who was God's example for us all, that in the end we, likewise, can also be lifted up in his likeness and image and also be positioned with him in eternity sharing in that same realm of glory in an age of authority whereby we should rule and reign with him as kings and priests. But like Jesus, you also will have to see all this in the spirit or it wouldn't be worth two cents to you. You see it was the glory beyond this life, beyond this veil of flesh, Christ was looking at. Thus we are told in **Heb. 12:2** to look unto this Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Phillips Trans. "Let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin which dogs our feet and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the source and the goal of our faith. For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his sufferings; and he is now seated at the right hand of God's throne. Think constantly on him enduring all that sinful man could say against him and you will not lose your purpose or your courage.") Therefore, you can see what Jesus was looking at and that was the joy set before him. That was what could make him endure the cross and despise the shame. He endured that to go to the cross and in a few hours fulfill death and all it was to accomplish, then be raised by the power

of God to be exalted into glory and seated at the right hand of the eternal spirit and majesty, authority and glory.

SEEING RICHES OF
INHERITANCE HELPS
OVERCOME

That is what he was looking at. Can you see that? If I look at it correctly, I can see it through the eye of faith (spiritual revelation), through spiritual revelation I too can see the riches of my inheritance or the things I am to inherit. To inherit it, I too must walk that same road. Yet walking that same road won't always be days of gloominess. There will be days the sun will shine and there will be days when clouds will cover the sun. Storms may rage; nevertheless, I know behind that cloud the sun still shines as brightly as ever.

NO ONE CONDEMNS GOD'S
ELECT

Verse 33: "who then shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God who justified?" (Certainly not!) Because he is the one in **verse 30** who already justified you, meaning, saw you as though you had never sinned. Seeing he had already justified you, who is the man or woman who can really bring an accusation before God? Who is that person who can bring a just accusation against you who love God that would stop you from living for God? Satan is the accuser of the brethren, however, those who love God have already been justified. According to God's own word there isn't

one charge or accusation against those who love God that can keep the elect of God out of his domain. I am what I am by the grace of God and it isn't because anyone did or didn't say or do such and such. God will neither accept me nor condemn me on the basis of what I have been because even before he justified me he knew what I had been and none of that hindered him back there from justifying me. No, he doesn't need your testimony about it, it is God who does the justifying. He is not interested in hearing all that other junk that any accuser would have to say against those whom he has already justified. He knows more of the truth than anyone else does. **Verse 34:** Who is he that condemneth, it is Christ that died (for us). Think of it beloved, there isn't one charge or one report that can be brought before the majesty of God's court that could change the situation of your walk with him. If someone condemns you and you know scripturally there is no truth behind it, why should you worry? While they are condemning you just remember, it is Christ who died for you, not the person doing the condemning. Don't look at people, look at the proper source. It is Christ who is at the right hand of God ever making intercession for us, so just remember when someone down here is absolutely giving you fits, there is one up there interceding (praying) and pleading your case. While someone down here may be persecuting you who have already been justified, you have a lawyer defending your cause whereby one day you may walk down the streets of glory clothed in his righteousness. Beloved, you

must look at it in the proper light of the scripture. However, most people spend their time on earth looking down, taking everything in such a defeated manner. When we reach a place where we feel defeated, it is there we have to depend on the grace of God. Some poor people merely live to hear what others have said about them. We are going to have to learn to stick our fingers in our ears and tell the devil to get away and leave us alone. Imagine Jesus with his spirit of discernment speaking to the multitudes knowing every skeptic present, but did that bother him, **NOT IN THE LEAST!** If he had lived his life in that hour like some people live their life today, his lower lip would have been dropped down all the time and he would have said, I simply can't go on any further, I am finished. But no, he didn't do that.

DEFEATED ATTITUDE NO GOOD

We must look at ourselves and ask a simple question, am I really a child of God or am I simply trying to fake my way through this life confessing to be something I am not? Don't live all your life in a defeated attitude because that will never take you to glory. There are millions of souls in hell today who would be glad to tell you to change your attitude and go back and do certain things and it will come out alright. Yet God won't allow them to come up and bear such a witness. You have to look at the future through the plan of God as well as the word of God and by faith look at Jesus, then look at yourself and say, God give

me grace and help me to walk this way. Therefore, seeing there isn't a soul here who can condemn you and change God's mind seeing he has already justified you, looking upon you as though you had never sinned, always remember, while someone is trying to chop you down, don't forget there is one up there making intercession for you.

NOTHING SEPARATES ELECT FROM GOD'S LOVE

Verse 35: "who shall separate us from the love of Christ" (or God)? Praise God, NO ONE CAN! If I am a true child of God no one can keep me from the love of God. They may kill the flesh, cut me up and throw one piece here and another piece there, yet in my soul they can't separate me from the love of God. It is inseparable!! Because now I am a part of God and he is a part of me. Like the Christians of old thrown to the lions, torn to bits, yet because their souls were united with Christ they could not be separated from the love of God, they were in him and he was in them. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation (remember, tribulation is trials and tests) this is only Paul's way of explaining that through trials and tests (tribulations) which you encounter in your Christian life, things that are to try you and prove whether you are a child of God or not, then all these things are definitely going to work for your good.

TRIBULATION NOR DISTRESS CAN SEPARATE

Shall tribulation or distress separate us? Distress used here means you have gotten into a terrible situation which seems hopeless and there is absolutely no way out, but you yell for help and God comes to your rescue. Sometimes we have to get stranded in these situations to really make us yell. It is not that we have to yell at God, it is just that once in a while he likes for us to realize we are fully dependent upon him and that without him we can do nothing. The third thing Paul mentions that cannot separate us is persecution, then famine, nakedness, peril or the sword. NO, the sword didn't separate them of old. Their remark was simply this, if I die while walking down the road of life looking for a crumb (in a famine), I will be with him. That is the way they felt about it because Paul says absolutely nothing shall be able to separate me from the love of God. Moreover, because of that fact we know that all things will work together for the good to them who love God, (his elect) called according to his plan.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Reaching the end of Paul's statement we hear him saying in **verse 37**, nay, and in all things we are more than conquerors. Conquerors mean we have gained the victory over the very thing that has defeated and discouraged us. How? Through him who loved us! I don't gain my victories through you, I may gain

comfort and encouragement from others. Nevertheless, the final victory is going to be made when in my mind and spirit I have exercised that action which determined the balance of decision when I placed it in the plan of God. Yes, Paul said we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. When I take that beautiful thought over into **I John 5:4** and hear John saying, for whosoever is born of God (positively) overcomes the world. And we could bring John's statement right into this setting. Furthermore we can say, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. Isn't it beautiful to see the pathway of God's elect! Those he foreknew, he calls. Them he calls, he justifies. Them he justifies, he glorifies. Everyone of these born again believers will fall right in line, Paul says here.

OVERCOMING TRIALS PROMOTES VICTORY

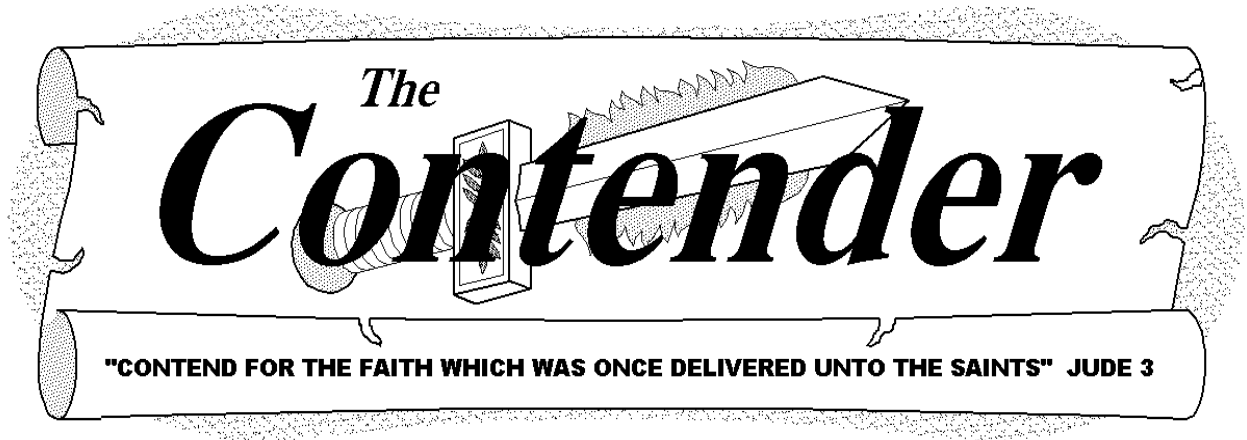
To be a child of God is not to find oneself constantly walking with God, having no trials or tests. The victory comes over the trials; therefore, if there was never a trial, who would be able to boast of victory. Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (**I John 5:4**). That faith or revelation, that determination which so aligns us with God also enables us to see God's wonderful plan, his beautiful promises as well as his outstretched hand, and lets us know all these things confronting us are merely stepping stones in our life. With this knowledge, though we face the devil and he knocks us down, we are able to get

right back up and go on. Therefore, this is the way to look at life: if you are going to follow God, you must follow him all the way. To do so, you are going to have to love him. Not because someone told you to, but it has to be a personal love and walk with him. If you really love God, he will not withhold one good thing from those who walk uprightly. He knows all our needs even before we ask, so why do we have to put the natural first? Put the spiritual first and let the natural fall in line because the Bible says, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Beloved, put his righteousness first so that if you die tonight you would know everything was alright. Put God and his righteousness first and the scripture says all these (natural) things shall be added unto you. However, to make all that effective and applicable in my life I must first prove to myself that I do have a love for God above everyone else. If we are loyal to God first, he promised not to let us go through this life living from hand to mouth. Though in order to prove and mold us he might at times use these material ends to try our faith, to see if I am living just for that thing, or am I really living for him. That is why many times those material things in our earthly life will be the means whereby God tries and tests us that we may know whether we truly love him or just tagging along. Remember, if we are just tagging along, something will come along one day and knock us completely off our feet and eliminate us. Paul completes his thought concerning those who love God, the elected ones, by saying, I am persuaded

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, principalities, powers, nor things present nor things to come nor height, depth or any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NO EXCUSE ACCEPTED

See, there is absolutely no excuse for anyone not to serve God. Don't you want to live for him? It is the only life worth living. I am sure we can all look back through the years and see many things we could have used as excuses to pull out and call it quits, but if we ever do entertain any such thoughts in our mind over some little excuse I pray God will permit us to see the pit of hell as its burning hot waiting for you, were you to decide to allow one of these little obstacles to turn you back. Remember, if I go there I can blame no one. I sent my own soul there! Sure, there are disappointments and heartaches in this life, but to live a victorious life in Christ, you have to get up out of all these pitfalls and these pitiful feelings and shake yourself and say, Lord by your grace there is nothing going to keep me from you. And never forget, **NO ONE CAN SHAKE YOU, YOU MUST SHAKE YOURSELF TO THIS REALITY!**



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