

Andrew Wommack's Live Bible Study Notes – 12/13/16

The Sovereignty of God – Part III

(Introduced on 11/29/16, Part II on 12/6/16)

I. James 1:2-4

- A. Note on James 1:2** – *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”*

James is clearly stating that we should rejoice in temptations. One translation says, *“Throw yourself a party.”* But this is often misinterpreted to say that God is the author of these temptations. That is not so. The very context shows that isn't so (James 1:13-14). God doesn't lead us into temptation. He is always with us, though, so we can rejoice, even in the midst of trials, knowing that the Lord will bring us out on the other side.

- B. Note on James 1:3** – *“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”*

This is essentially the same thing being said in Romans 5:3. Yet Romans 15:4 says patience comes from the Scriptures. Which is it? Patience (which I believe is faith over a prolonged time) comes from the Scriptures (Rom. 10:17 and 15:4), but it has to be developed or matured. It's like someone who goes to school to learn a trade. They may be completely trained upon graduation, but they still develop their skills as they put that training into practice. Likewise, we get our faith and patience from the Scriptures, but they develop as we encounter trials in life.

Soldiers train in basic, but they don't have the same level of proficiency as the soldiers who have been in actual combat. Combat makes better soldiers than just training. But if a soldier were to try to embrace his enemy because he thought his commander sent them to make him a better soldier, he would be killed. They are the enemy, and a soldier only becomes a better soldier if he fights the enemy. Embracing the enemy leads to death.

Some Christians have interpreted these passages to say that our Commander-in-Chief (Jesus) sends these problems on us to perfect us. Therefore, they actually embrace the problems instead of fighting against them. And many have died doing just that. God doesn't send trials and temptations into our lives (Mark 4:17). That's the work of the devil. But we do develop our patience as we resist life's temptations. But it is imperative that we keep it clear who is the author of problems and who is the Author of blessings. God doesn't tempt us (James 1:13). We have to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7).

- C. Note on James 1:4** – *“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”*

In other words, we don't run from the battle just because we are in a tight spot. If we persevere, we will be better off in the long run. Our faith will develop into patience, and the end results of that will be that we become perfect and complete, wanting nothing.

II. James 1:12-14

- A. Note on James 1:12** – *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”*

The word *endure* means different things to different people. Some people define this as just putting up with a situation. But the Greek word *hupomeno* that was translated “*endureth*” here means “to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere” (*Strong's Concordance*). This is not a passive word, as some people use the word *endure*; it is an active word stressing perseverance. So, this verse is placing a blessing on those who go through hard times in faith, not those who just put up with problems because there is nothing else to do.

Revelation 2:10 promised this same crown of life to those who endured prison and even death for the sake of the Lord. In that passage, the Lord's promise was to those who were faithful, even unto death. It's easy to see this isn't speaking about those who were just thrown in prison and rotted there. This is speaking of those who maintained their faith while they were in prison. It's speaking again of perseverance.

The way we endure hardship is to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The Greek word *peirasmos*, which was translated “*temptation*” in this verse, means “a putting to proof (by experiment (of good), experience (of evil), solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication, adversity” (*Strong's Concordance*). It comes from the root word *peirazo*, and this word means “to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline” (*Strong's Concordance*).

- B. Note on James 1:13** – *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”*

The preceding verses have talked about temptation and the benefits of persevering through them. This is often interpreted that God places these trials on us for

redemptive purposes. But this verse makes it very clear that God is not the author of these trials. Trials come, and there is much benefit to be derived from enduring them in a godly manner. But they do not come from God. Thinking God is the author of our problems will cause us to submit to them instead of resisting them, and they will not work to our advantage (James 4:7). See my notes at James 1:2-3.

Some might question the accuracy of this statement in light of Genesis 22:1, which says that God tempted Abraham. But on closer examination, this verse doesn't say God doesn't tempt us at all; it says the Lord doesn't tempt us with evil. The Lord does test us as He tested Abraham, but it's only to bring us to a better place. He never puts evil on us to hurt us. It's like an employer who gives an employee a test to see if they can move on to the next level. The Lord is not like an employer who would test an employee with the idea, "I'll fire them if they don't pass."

- C. Note on James 1:14** – *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."*

Temptation doesn't come from without but within. Something from the outside might trigger a response, but it's our own lusts that are the problem. Therefore, if we deal with our lusts, we deal with temptation. It's unrealistic to think that we can live in a vacuum where there will never be any opportunity to do something wrong. But we can deal with our own hearts to where the lusts have been subdued and therefore temptation has been made impotent.

The *New International Version* says, *"But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed."* The *Amplified Bible* says, *"But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions)."* So, our desires, passions, lust, or emotions is where sin is conceived.

III. Romans 5:3-6

- A. Romans 5:3** – *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."*

Note 7 at Romans 5:3: Paul had just expressed the joy that he had concerning the Second Coming of Jesus and the glory that would be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). Anybody can rejoice about heaven, but here Paul began to say that he had that same rejoicing in the midst of tribulation. This is something that very few people can say, and Paul was presenting this as a direct result of justification by faith.

When we believe that God loves us because of our faith in Him, and not because of our performance for Him, then we rejoice—not only in the good times and pleasant things, like thoughts of heaven, but also in the hard times. Our faith remains

steadfast. However, those who trust in their own efforts will be devastated in times of trouble because they will know they are getting what they deserve, and they will feel that they have to clean up their act before they can expect any help. Their attention will be on self instead of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith (Heb. 12:2).

Paul continued this same thought on through Romans 5:10. In Romans 5:6-8, he illustrated how great the love of God was for us in that He died for us when we were ungodly. Then he drew a conclusion by way of comparison: If God loved us when we were His enemies, then how much more does He love us now that we are His children? That's the reason Paul could rejoice even in tribulation. If God could work in his life to bring him to justification while he was a sinner, then how much more, now that he was reconciled to God, will God work whatever comes against him for his good!

Note 8 at Romans 5:3: People have taken these scriptures to say that God is the one who brings tribulations to accomplish these positive results in our lives. That is not what these scriptures say.

Tribulations exist, not because God creates them, but because there is a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. And when we operate in faith, God can grant us such victory that we are actually better off because of the battle (see note 9 at this verse).

It's just like when an army goes to war. If they win, there are spoils to be gained. But if those soldiers embraced their enemy because of the spoil they were expecting to receive, they would be killed instead of blessed. First, they have to fight and win the war. Then, and only then, will the spoils be available. The enemy doesn't come to be a blessing, but a blessing can be obtained from the enemy if their opponents are victorious.

Likewise, tribulations and adversities are not blessings from God; they are attacks from the Enemy intended to steal away the Word of God from our lives. No one should say that the temptation came from God, for God is not the one who tempts anyone (James 1:13). However, there are spoils to be gained when we fight and win over our problems.

If problems were what perfected us, then most Christians would have been perfected long ago and those who experience the greatest problems would be the greatest Christians; but that's not the way it is. God's Word is given to make us perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). God's Word does not need to be supplemented with problems to accomplish its work.

This is a pivotal point. Those who believe God has ordained the problems in their lives to work some redemptive virtue will submit to those problems and therefore to Satan, the author of those problems. They have to or else, in their way of thinking, they would be rebelling against God. Yet James 4:7 tells us to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil. If Satan can reverse our thinking on this issue and get us to submit to the problems he brings into our lives, he's got us (Rom. 6:16).

Paul was simply rejoicing that even in tribulation, he had the opportunity to use, and therefore strengthen, his patience that had already been given him as a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and through the Word of God (Rom. 15:4). And as he believed that as he stood in patience, he would gain experience that would cause him to hope even more the next time the devil attacked.

Likewise, we can rejoice in tribulation, knowing that regardless of what the devil does, we will win and reap the spoils of victory.

Note 9 at Romans 5:3: The word "*worketh*" was translated from the Greek word *katergazomai*, and that Greek word means "to work fully, i.e. accomplish; by implication, to finish, fashion" (*Strong's Concordance*). Paul was not saying that tribulations produced patience. Patience comes from the Scriptures (Rom. 15:4). But tribulations cause us to use what God has already given us through His Word, and we therefore become stronger as a result (see note 8 at this verse).

Note 10 at Romans 5:3: According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, *patience* means "the capacity, quality, or fact of being patient." One definition of *patient* is "persevering; constant" (*AHD*). The Greek word used for "*patience*" here is *hupomone*, and it means "cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy" (*Strong's Concordance*). Patience is not a passive word, as many people use it; it is an active word.

Patience is actually faith—faith that is sustained over a long period of time. Patience comes from the Scriptures (Rom. 15:4), just as faith does (Rom. 10:17). Patience is a fruit of the Spirit, just like faith (Gal. 5:22-23). It was by faith that Moses endured (the definition of *patience*, Heb. 11:27). It was through faith and patience that Abraham received the promises (Heb. 6:12-15), and not just faith, but a faith that was constant over a twenty-five-year period of time.

Therefore, patience is not just passively waiting on God to do something, but it is actively believing for the manifestation of God's promise against all odds, regardless of how long it takes. That kind of faith will make you perfect and complete, not wanting for any good thing (James 1:4).

Patience is a byproduct of hope. Romans 8:25 says, "*But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*" When people have hope firmly

established in them, no obstacle or length of time can keep them from enduring. That's why the Scriptures produce patience, because they give people hope (Rom. 15:4).

Therefore, patience, hope, and faith are all intertwined. People can't have one without the others. Those who say they are patiently waiting on God yet have lost their hope are deceived. Likewise, those who don't believe God are not operating in patience. First comes hope from a promise of God's Word. Then faith begins to give substance and evidence to those things that were hoped for (Heb. 11:1). And if time is involved before the manifestation comes, then patience does its work (James 1:4).

B. Note on Romans 5:4 – “And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

Note 11 at Romans 5:4: The Greek word used for “*experience*” here is *dokime*, and it means “approved character; the quality of being approved as a result of test and trials” (*Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* by Fritz Rienecker). Sanday and Headlam also defined this word in this verse as “the temper of the veteran as opposed to that of the raw recruit.” Therefore, this verse is speaking of the character that is produced as a result of having fought battles and won.

Note 12 at Romans 5:4: Hope by itself will never give people victory. Many people have hoped for things and yet have never realized those hopes because they never moved into faith. Faith is the victory that causes people to overcome the world (1 John 5:4), yet faith won't work without hope.

Just as a thermostat activates the power unit on an air conditioner, so hope is what activates our faith. Faith only produces what we hope for (Heb. 11:1). Therefore, hope is the first step toward faith.

The word *hope* means “a desire accompanied by confident expectation” (*American Heritage Dictionary*), so desiring the things of God with some expectation of obtaining them is the first step in walking in faith. Once this hope is present, then faith begins to bring the desired thing into manifestation. If a delay is encountered, patience completes the work (see note 10 at Rom. 5:3).

In context, Paul was saying that our experience “*worketh*” (see note 9 at Rom. 5:3) hope. However, he also said in this same epistle (Rom. 15:4) that hope comes through the Scriptures. Therefore, it is to be understood that the character that is developed through tribulations just adds to the hope that we have already received through God's Word.

Hope is a positive imagination. Hope is the thermostat that controls faith.

- C. Note on Romans 5:5** – *“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*

Galatians 5:6 says faith works by love, but this verse reveals that hope works by love also. God’s great love for us is the motivation for faith and hope. It causes us to be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19).

- D. Note on Romans 5:6** – *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”*

Life for Today Study Bible Notes

Note 13 at Romans 5:6: Notice the terms that Paul used to describe us before the transformation of the new birth. We were weak (this verse), ungodly (this verse), sinners (Rom. 5:8), and enemies (Rom. 5:10). The Lord didn’t save us because we deserved it; it was an act of grace.

As great as this truth is, Paul didn’t stop here. He continued on to make a comparison that if God loved us enough to die for us when we were weak, ungodly, sinners, and enemies, then much more now that we are justified (Rom. 5:9) and reconciled (Rom. 5:10) is He willing to save us in spite of our actions.

IV. Romans 8:26-29

- A. Note on Romans 8:26** – *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

The Greek word that was translated *“helpeth”* in this verse is *sunantilambanomai*, and it means “to take hold of opposite together, i.e. co-operate (assist)” (*Strong’s Concordance*). This means the Holy Spirit doesn’t do this for us but with us.

Many people have said that this groaning is speaking in tongues. But speaking in tongues can be uttered. This is speaking of a groaning in the spirit that is different than speaking in tongues. The Greek word *alaletos*, which was translated *“which cannot be uttered”* in this verse, means “unspeakable” (*Strong’s Concordance*). This is clearly referring to something other than speaking in tongues.

Life for Today Study Bible Notes

Note 1 at Romans 8:26: The word *“likewise”* is stressing that in the same way that hope helps us endure until the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23), so the Holy Spirit helps us through the frailties of our flesh by interceding for us.

Note 2 at Romans 8:26: The word “*helpeth*” was translated from the Greek word *sunantilambanomai*, and it means “to take hold of opposite together, i.e. co-operate (assist)” (*Strong’s Concordance*). It describes a union, not the Holy Spirit doing all the interceding for us. The Holy Spirit helps us as we are interceding, but He doesn’t automatically do it for us.

Note 3 at Romans 8:26: The Greek word that was translated “*infirmities*” in this verse is *astheneia*, and it means “feebleness (of mind or body); by implication, malady; morally, frailty” (*Strong’s Concordance*). This same word was translated “*weakness*” five times (1 Cor. 2:3, 15:43; 2 Cor. 12:9, 13:4; and Heb. 11:34), so it is easy to see that this word is describing mental and moral weakness, not sickness.

Paul went on to describe what these infirmities are when he said, “*For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.*” The infirmities this scripture is speaking of are the weaknesses that come from not knowing how we should pray.

Note 4 at Romans 8:26: This has been an encouraging scripture for countless believers. It is certain that none of us knows exactly how to pray in every situation. Therefore, it is very comforting to know that the Holy Spirit is there to help us. However, as mentioned in note 2 at this verse, He helps us; He doesn’t do the interceding for us but through us.

Even Jesus drew on this ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is written in John 11:33 and 38 that Jesus groaned in the Spirit twice when He raised Lazarus from the dead. What infirmity did Jesus have that He needed this ministry of the Holy Spirit? Jesus had no sin, but He did have an infirmity—His physical mind. Even a sinless human mind could not comprehend raising a man from the grave after four days.

If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit to help Him when He didn’t know how to pray, then certainly this should be an important ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Note 5 at Romans 8:26: This intercession of the Holy Spirit is with “*groanings which cannot be uttered.*” Some Spirit-filled Christians have said that this means groaning that cannot be uttered in our normal speech and therefore have said this is referring to speaking in tongues. Yet this is referring to an intercession that is different from speaking in tongues.

In John 11:33 and 38, Jesus groaned in the Spirit twice. This is the exact terminology that is used here in Romans 8:26, and in John 11, it is easy to see that no words were uttered. It was exactly as the Scripture states: a groaning in the Spirit.

All those who have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit have or will have this happen to them. Paul was referring to this in Galatians 4:19 when he spoke of travailing in birth for the Galatians. This groaning of the Holy Spirit is not just of grief

but a groan of anger and resistance against Satan's devices in people's lives. Many times Christians don't discern this, because they think they are the only ones grieved with their situations. But this is the Holy Spirit desiring to get into intercession with people against their problems.

Although the groaning is unutterable, it can be discerned, and many times people react to this with audible groans or other outward acts. This has led to religious doctrines and traditions that are offensive to many people and are unscriptural. There is nothing wrong with people reacting to the inner working of the Holy Spirit as long as they don't confuse their reactions with the Holy Spirit's actions. This intercession cannot be uttered.

Any counterfeits that religion may have produced only serve to illustrate that there has to be a genuine. The genuine groaning in the Spirit is priceless.

Jesus groaned in the Spirit twice before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

- B. Note on Romans 8:27** – *“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

“He that searcheth the hearts” is speaking of God the Father, and He knows perfectly well what the Holy Spirit is communicating. The Holy Spirit is always leading us and interceding with us for God's perfect will to come to pass in our lives. We don't always say things correctly, but when we intercede, the Holy Spirit translates our hearts' cry to the Father. The Father and the Holy Spirit communicate perfectly.

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Note 6 at Romans 8:27: *“He that searcheth the hearts”* is a reference to God. God knows our hearts, and He knows that the Holy Spirit will only intercede for the will of God to be done. The Holy Spirit is never at a loss as to how to convey our needs to the Father, as we sometimes are. That's the reason this ministry of the Holy Spirit is so important. There is such oneness between the Father and the Holy Spirit that even His groanings are perfectly understood.

- C. Note on Romans 8:28** – *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

This is one of the most abused verses in the Bible. Many people have quoted this to say that whatever happens to us works out for our good. Observation can easily reveal that is not the case.

First of all, this verse begins with the conjunction “*And*.” This means everything that is being said here is dependent on the previous verse about the Holy Spirit making intercessions together with us. If we are not letting the Holy Spirit help us with intercession, then all things do not work together for good.

Second, notice that this verse does not say that all things come from God, as it is often quoted. It is simply saying that if we are interceding in the power of the Holy Spirit, then we can take whatever the devil throws at us and make it work together for our good. That is a huge difference. If people interpret this verse to say that whatever comes our way is from God, then it makes them yield to their problems and removes them from the deliverance available through Christ (James 4:7).

Notice also that this only works for those who love God. That’s not everyone. And it also only works for those who are called according to His purpose. First John 3:8 says, “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*” Those who are not resisting the problem but submit to the problem are not operating in the same calling that Jesus did.

So, whatever comes our way only works together for our good if we are interceding in the power of the Holy Spirit, if we love God, and if we are out to destroy the works of the devil. Those are big ifs that people who submit to problems as being God’s will do not overcome.

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Note 7 at Romans 8:28: This is a very powerful verse with a wonderful promise, but it has been greatly abused and misapplied. This verse is not saying that everything that happens to us is from God and is used by Him to accomplish His purposes in our lives. The Bible doesn’t teach that.

Second Peter 3:9 makes a clear statement that the Lord is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” However, many men and women are perishing, because they have a choice. So, regarding salvation, God’s will is not being done in the lives of many people.

Concerning physical healing, the Bible states that Jesus has already provided healing for us (Is. 53:5) and that it is God’s will for us to be healed (3 John 2). Yet not all of us are healed, and our sicknesses are not automatically working some redemptive purpose in our lives.

Romans 8:28 begins with the word “*and*.” This means that the statement about everything working together for our good was made after Paul had spoken of the Holy Spirit making intercession for us. If we are not cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that He can make intercession for us (see note 4 at Rom. 8:26), then everything will not work together for our good.

This verse also says this happens for those *“that love God, to them who are the called.”* That means this doesn’t apply to everyone. However, this verse has been used to try to convince even unbelievers that God is controlling the circumstances of their lives. That is not the message of this verse.

Also, this verse does not say that everything that comes our way is from God but rather that the Lord can work it together for our good through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:16 clearly states that if we yield to the devil, we become his slaves. The false teaching that nothing happens to us but what God wills or allows has caused many of us to yield to Satan’s bondage instead of resisting him (James 4:7).

People may cite experiences where they learned great lessons through tragedy and argue that these negative experiences are the only way the Lord could have accomplished His will in their lives. Again, that is not what the Bible teaches.

Second Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”* Second Timothy 3:17 says that God’s Word will make us perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. That means we don’t have to learn through hardships. God’s Word is for correction and reproof.

Although not ordained by God for their good, people will experience tribulation. Therefore, they can and should learn from trials, but God’s Word could have taught them the same thing with less grief. Those who submit to their problems because they believe God has brought them to teach them something are making a great mistake. That mistake is allowing the devil to inflict much pain in their lives.

Romans 8:28 is really promising that when we let the Holy Spirit intercede through us with these groanings that cannot be uttered, we can rest assured that regardless of what the devil brings across our path, God can turn that situation around and work it together for our good.

- D. Note on Romans 8:29** – *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

This verse is the key to predestination (1 Pet. 1:2). God only predestinates those who He foreknew would accept Him. He has never predestinated anyone to hell. Those He knew would accept Him as Savior are predestinated to become just like Jesus. As we renew our minds, this can happen to a degree in this life, but every true believer will be exactly like Jesus when we see Him (1 John 3:1-2).

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Note 1 at Romans 8:29: The word *“foreknowledge”* refers to God knowing who would accept His offer of salvation in advance of them actually doing it. The Scriptures teach that we (believers) were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). That’s how infinite God’s ability is to know our choices in advance.

The Scriptures also reveal that there are some things God does not know. Twice in the book of Jeremiah, God said the fact that people would offer their children as sacrifices to demon gods never even came into His mind (Jer. 19:5 and 32:35). There are some things that God Himself said He had never foreseen.

It is most probable that the Lord has the ability to know everything in advance, but He simply doesn’t choose to exercise that ability in every situation. He told us to be wise concerning that which is good, and simple (or innocent) concerning that which is evil (Rom. 16:19). He also told us to think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and things that have virtue and praise (Phil. 4:8). That’s the way He desires us to be because that’s the way He is.

Therefore, when God acted surprised that Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden tree, He probably was. As we have already pointed out from Ephesians 1:4, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He knew there would be a transgression and a need for redemption before man was even created. But apparently, He did not utilize His foreknowledge to the extent that He knew every move that man was making. No reason is given for this, but certainly one reason is that an absolute use of God’s foreknowledge would hinder His relationship with man.

God sent two angels to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if their actions were really as bad as had been reported to Him (Gen. 18:20-19:29). The Lord tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1-10). After the test, He said, *“For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me”* (Gen. 22:12). The Lord repented for choosing Saul to be king when He saw the way he turned out (1 Sam. 15:11). The Scripture contains many other examples besides these.

God’s ability to know all things in advance is limitless, but by His choice, God does not know every detail. Understanding foreknowledge provides the foundation for understanding predestination (see note 2 at this verse), calling (Rom. 8:30), and election (1 Pet. 1:2).

Note 2 at Romans 8:29: This verse provides the key for unlocking the answer to the doctrine of predestination. Predestination is dependent on foreknowledge (see note 1 at this verse).

The word *predestinate* means to predetermine. “*Predestinate*” and its variant “*predestinated*” are only used four times in the New Testament (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:5, and 11). People have interpreted this doctrine as saying that God predetermines everything in people’s lives, including whether they will be saved or lost. This interpretation is not consistent with other doctrines or examples in Scripture. This belief will destroy people’s motivation to fight evil and do good. If God predetermines everything that happens in people’s lives, then everything that happens to them is God’s will—even sin. That is not true.

This verse limits God’s predestination to only those whom He foreknew. This means that only those people who God knew would accept His offer of salvation have been predestined. He does not predestine people to be saved or lost. Those whom He foreknew in Christ have been predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. As we can tell by observation, God doesn’t even force that to happen. With some Christians, this will not occur until they receive their glorified bodies, but it will occur.

God gave all people free will, and God will not violate that free will except in judgment. Even in judgment, God is only enforcing the choices that people have already made of their own free will. All people have a God-given right to go to hell if they want to.

Just as in Romans 8:28, God works everything together for good for those who already love Him. And even then He does not take away their free will. Everything that happens to them is not good, and it is not from God. However, God, in His infinite wisdom, can work it together for good (see note 7 at Rom. 8:28). Romans 8:29 is simply continuing to develop the truth that God is for man and has predetermined that those who have come to Him for salvation will be saved to the uttermost.

Understood correctly, this verse provides great reassurance to believers that God is for them and working with them to bring them to the complete stature of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Note 3 at Romans 8:29: This English word, “*firstborn*,” was translated from the Greek word *prototokos*. According to *Strong’s Concordance*, this is a compound Greek word comprised of *protos*, which means “foremost (in time, place, order or importance),” and *tikto*, which means “to produce (from seed...).” Therefore, this word, “*firstborn*,” could refer to either first in order or importance. Both of these applications are true of Jesus.

Although others were raised from the dead before Jesus, Jesus was the first one to be raised from the dead never to die again. Jesus was also the firstborn in the sense of importance, since His resurrection made all other resurrections possible.

In context, Paul was stressing that we believers are predestined to be just like Jesus, then he drew from scripture that prophesied Jesus being the firstborn (Ps. 89:27). Therefore, the point being made is the extent that we will be conformed to the image of Jesus. There are other children who will become just like Jesus, and it is in this sense that "*firstborn*" is used here.