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## Sermon Study on Rom. 8:24-28

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became intense and full of awe, and now, for the first time, large numbers of rude and uncultured people yearned towards the mysteries of absolute spiritual freedom. The isolation of each person's religious responsibility from that of his fellows was a necessary condition of his higher spiritual progress.' But Dr. Marshall goes on to show in detail how this creation, through a personal experience, of free men furnished the community with a new race of energetic and serviceable citizens and thus set the world forward on the way even of material progress. For a healthy society the awakening of the individual is indispensable."

Dean Milman declares: "No Pelagian ever has worked or will work a religious revolution."

Sabatier finds "the moral crisis of conversion is the first and best initiation into the truths of Paulinism."

He tells of an eminent professor of history at the Sorbonne who first learned the meaning of Paul's theology from a Christian shoemaker at Lyons.

Six martyrs at Scilli in 180 had in their box "the books we use and, in addition, the letters of that holy man Paul." Harnack holds them not scholars but "certainly mere plebians."

Yes, the common man can read and understand. Read!

Oak Park, Ill.

WM. DALLMANN

## Sermon Study on Rom. 8:24-28

First half of Eisenach Epistle Lesson for New Year's Day

The theme of the first part of Paul's Letter to the Romans is the very heart of the Christian religion, the doctrine of the justification of sinners by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, chap. 1:18-5:21. Beginning with chap. 6, the apostle speaks of the necessary fruit of justification, sanctification of life, and admonishes his readers to unflagging zeal in striving for holiness. This sanctification requires a constant struggle of the spirit, the new man, which delights in the Law of God, against the flesh, in which dwelleth no good thing, chap. 7. In order to encourage his readers to fight this battle courageously and faithfully, Paul reminds them of the aid of the Holy Spirit, 8:1-17. In the closing verses of this section he calls attention to another factor that might discourage the Christian and tempt him to give up the fight, the many sufferings of this time. Over against this temptation Paul points forward and upward to the glory awaiting Christians, a glory both great and sure, a glory so great that all creation anxiously looks forward to it (vv. 19-22), so great that all Christians groan for it (v. 23), so great that even the Holy Spirit within them supports them with unutter-



able groanings (v. 24). At the same time this glory is sure and reliable, resting on God's counsel, determined upon before the world began, carried out in the fulness of time, consummated in eternity. The Eisenach Epistle-lesson for New Year's Day is taken from the concluding paragraph of the section describing the magnitude of this glory and the opening paragraph of the section setting forth its certainty.

"For we are saved by hope," v. 24. We are saved. The historic aorist designates a past fact, something that has actually happened. "Saved" includes the entire divine plan of salvation as conceived by God in eternity, as carried out by Him through the vicarious sacrifice of His Son, as finding its final consummation in life eternal. This salvation has been appropriated to Christians when by the regenerating grace of God they were made children of God through the means of grace. At that very moment they were given, and from that moment they were in possession of, the full salvation that Christ procured for them. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47. Glorious fact: we are saved!

Yet it is not only, nor is it chiefly, this assured fact that Paul means to stress. The chief emphasis lies on the phrase "by hope," which is placed first in the original. "Hope" is not the objective hope, the thing hoped for, as it undoubtedly is in the next clause. "A word with the nuances of *ἐλπίς* in a mind with the speed of Paul's need not be treated so rigorously, especially as the resulting construction is in itself extremely dubious and yields at best an artificial sense." (*Exp. Greek Test.*) The dative is not to be translated "by hope." Paul never uses this expression; nor does the thought conferred by this translation suit the context as well as when we regard it as the modal dative, describing the manner in which we were saved. We were saved not in a manner which enabled us at once to see and enjoy the full consummation of our salvation, but in the manner, in the way, of hope. The modal dative is not infrequently used with the article, e. g., Acts 4:36; 11:23; 15:1; Gal. 1:22. In our passage the article designates hope as the definitely Christian hope. All those magnificent blessings which the apostle had enumerated in vv. 17-23, from "glorified" (v. 17) to "redemption of our body" (v. 23), all are assured facts, all are ours by virtue of our being saved, we own them as our blessed heritage; yet they all lie in the future, in the realm of hope and longing expectation. And they are objects of hope by divine plan and dispensation. It is God's will that we, while on earth, wait and sigh and long for our future salvation. For in this manner we were saved; our salvation, sure and certain, is a salvation in the mode or form of hope, a salvation of which we have only the first-fruits,



the foretaste, while we await in hope its perfect consummation on that Day.

This very mode of our salvation implies that we patiently await its full manifestation and not ask to see now what by its very nature cannot now be seen. That is the thought brought out by Paul in the next words.

"But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," vv. 24, 25. Hoping and seeing are contradictory opposites. As long as we hope, we do not and cannot see. As soon as we see, hope ceases, and fruition and enjoyment succeed hope. Yet hope, though it does not yet see its object, is not on that account an uncertainty, a wavering between assurance and doubt. That may be true of hope based on human premises or conclusions. The hope of which Paul speaks, the hope in which we are saved, is of a different nature, because it rests on a different foundation, the redemption of Christ, the unfailing grace, the infallible promise of the Lord, our God. If *we* hope, we Christians, we children of our heavenly Father, if we *hope* for that we see not, "through patience we are continually waiting."

Ἰππομένειν means to remain, abide, under, ὑπό. The noun denotes remaining under trials and tribulations, sighing, longing for deliverance, but never once complaining, grumbling, muttering, or charging God with injustice or lack of love and consideration. It denotes that steadfastness of character, that constant loyalty, that endurance even in the evil day, which marked Christ's life on earth (Is. 50:5, 6, 7; 53:7), whose life is at once the well-spring and the pattern of the Christians' patience. Rom. 5:3; 15:4. Col. 1:11.

"In the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 6:11; Titus 2:2), instead of the 'faith, hope, and charity' of earlier letters, Paul writes 'faith, charity, patience,' as if he had discovered by his experience that in this life 'hope' has mainly to be shown in the form of 'patience.'" (*Exp. Greek Test.*, II, p. 651.)

By means of such patience, on the way of such constancy, "we wait," ἀπεκδεχόμεθα. This word is rarely found outside of the New Testament, and there only eight times: once of God's waiting in the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:20), seven times of the Christian's waiting for the future glory (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). It denotes assiduous, unwavering waiting, waiting it out, never tiring until we see what we hoped for, enjoy to the full what we have waited for. The apostle states it as a simple fact, self-understood, that we Christians actually wait it out. The present is the durative: we are continually waiting it out through patience. Using the descriptive indicative instead of the hortatory subjunctive makes Paul's admonition the more



forceful. The reader will tell himself, Why, I should not be a Christian if I should not patiently wait and hope.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," v. 26. "Likewise" is referred by some interpreters to what immediately precedes. As we patiently wait, so the Spirit patiently assists us and enables us to hope steadfastly. Others, and theirs seems to be the better interpretation, connect the groanings of the Spirit, whereby He comes to our aid (v. 26) with the groanings of the creatures (v. 22) and of the Christians (v. 23). The apostle had introduced this groaning of the creatures and the Christians in order to impress his readers with the magnitude of the future glory. It is a glory so great that the Christians anxiously look for it (vv. 19, 22), so great that it is the object of the Christian's sighing (v. 23), so great that even the Holy Spirit groans within us in His effort to help us patiently to wait for the consummation of our hope.

The word Paul uses for "help" is one that occurs only once more in the New Testament, Luke 10:40. In the Septuagint it occurs Ps. 89:21 ("established") and Ex. 18:22 ("bear the burden with thee"). The latter is the best and most literal translation. The word means to take hold of something together with another, face to face with him, ἀντί; cp. Robertson's Grammar, I, p. 573. Standing face to face with us, encouraging us by calling to our mind the words of our Savior (John 14:26), the Spirit lays hold of our weakness together with us. We are so weak and feeble against our own flesh and blood, which will not willingly submit to the "sufferings of this present time" (v. 18). "Why not enjoy now and here? Why wait for a glory no one has seen? Who knows whether we ever shall be recompensed for our anguish and woe?" It ought to be an easy matter for the Christian to silence his flesh and blood. Think what a Spirit dwells within thee, What a Father's smile is thine, What a Savior died to win thee. Child of heaven, shouldst thou repine? Yet how hard for our soul to take its full salvation. To rise o'er sin and fear and care, To find joy in every station, Something still to do or bear!

What a blessing to have in our daily struggle with life's vexations and vicissitudes so powerful a Helper as God the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. And how great a glory that which seems to the Holy Spirit of sufficient importance to come Himself to our aid lest we fail to wait it out in patient hope. The apostle uses the present time, "helpeth," the durative present. While we are at times in danger of weakening, the Spirit is constantly taking hold of our weakness, constantly imbuing us with new strength from above.

Now the apostle singles out one particular item of the Christian's manifold activities, a very important one, neglected only too



frequently because of our weakness: prayer. Using this as an example, Paul shows both the extent of our weakness and the unstinted measure of the Spirit's cooperation.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered," v. 26. The article τό "makes clearer the substantival idea of the indirect question and its relation to the principal clause." (Robertson's *Grammar*, p. 766.) Here the article modifies the entire clause. What we are to pray for according to what is needed, this (τό) we do not know. Paul does not mean to deny to the Christian all knowledge of what we ought to pray for. He says we do not know what to pray according to what is needed, καθὸ δεῖ. The iterative present denotes what is needed in each individually occurring case. Paul includes himself. Even this hero of faith, who was in such close communion with his Lord and Master, is not ashamed to confess his own ignorance of the proper object of prayer in the ever-changing vicissitudes of life. We know that Paul had asked to be relieved of that thorn in the flesh, the removal of which he very likely regarded as an indispensable requisite for successful work. The Lord thought otherwise. Cp. 2 Cor. 12:7-9. Even Christ in His deep humiliation thought it possible that the cup might be taken from Him, and so He prayed, though expressing at the same time perfect willingness to drink that cup if it was not possible to fulfil His petition. What we may be asking for in any given trouble may seem to us bread (Luke 11:11), something very essential, needful, profitable, for our bodily welfare and for our soul's salvation. In the all-seeing eye of our Father the object of our prayer would be to us a stone, i. e., something detrimental to our temporal and eternal welfare, endangering our spiritual life, possibly subversive of our faith.

"But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." "Itself" is placed before "the Spirit" to emphasize that this very Spirit, who has been mentioned as coming to our aid, Himself, personally, helps us by making intercession. That is not the only manner in which He aids us, but a very needful one, since prayer is so essential a part of a Christian's life.

"Maketh intercession." Again the apostle uses a very significant word (the composite occurring only here), the etymological meaning of which will help us to understand the full significance of the Spirit's work. The word means to go to, to fall in with, to meet, some one for the purpose of conversation, consultation, or supplication; to entreat, to intercede. The ὑπέρ means over, so that the composite verb describes a person standing over one and supplicating for him with another. This is exactly what the Spirit



does as part of His carrying the Christian's burden. The child of God has fallen to the ground under the heavy load of the sufferings of this time. He does not understand God's ways, and still less can he clearly see just what is the one thing needful for him in this precise crisis, at this very moment. His flesh shrieks loudly for relief, removal of the burden, rest from worry. His spirit, his new nature, seeks to point out to him the marvelous hope before him. But that is unseen, far away, and the suffering so overwhelming! Behold, at such times there is One standing over the Christian as he lies prone, ready to perish. Though He dwells within our hearts, He pleads *over* us, in our behalf, in our stead; supplementing, purifying, strengthening, our prayers by His own. The present is iterative, durative. He intercedes for us as often as there is need for such intercession; and is there any time when a Christian does not need such help of "Himself the Spirit"?

It is impossible to define exactly the manner in which the Spirit sighs. Some expositors say that a Christian may at least at times distinguish the sighs of the Spirit from his own. Others hold that the Spirit uses only the human organs for His sighing. Both interpretations seem to go beyond what the text actually states. The apostle very definitely states that the Spirit sighs; he calls these sighs unutterable, "that baffle words" (*Exp. Greek Test.*, II, p. 651); unutterable, of course, not for the Spirit but for the Christian within whose heart the Spirit sighs. The apostle does not say that a Christian is aware of these groanings. That seems not to be the purpose of the Spirit's sighing. What the apostle says is that the Spirit intercedes for us with unutterable sighs; they are *intercessory* prayers. And as little as we hear the intercessory pleas of Christ, so little need we hear or become aware of the sighs of the Holy Ghost. We know that He intercedes and sighs for us, and this suffices. In this fact we take comfort; this fact we believe whether we hear, are aware of, the sighs or not.

While we may not be aware of the groanings that continually are going on in our heart and unceasingly rise up to the throne of grace, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," v. 27. The One searching the hearts is God, the present participle describing such searching as one of the characteristic marks of God. Cp. Ps. 139:1, 23; Jer. 17:9, 10; 1 Chron. 28:9. The Searcher of our hearts hears our slightest sigh, and He hears also the groanings of the Spirit. He knows the mind of the Spirit, what the Spirit has in mind, His inmost thoughts and purposes. As the Spirit searches the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), so God searches and knows, perceives, understands, the mind of the Spirit, His purpose in sighing. Even though these sighings of the Spirit arising from the Christian's heart are intermingled with



many an imperfect and sinful lament of the Christian himself, audibly expressed or kept hidden in the secret of the heart, the Searcher of the hearts knows how to distinguish between the imperfect sighs of His children and the pure and holy groanings of the Spirit dwelling in their heart. And He knows the mind of the Spirit, because, or rather that, He makes intercession. The *ὅτι* is not to be translated "because," since what follows states no reason why God knows the mind of the Spirit, which He knows by virtue of His omniscience. The sentence explains what is in the mind of the Spirit. Three items are specified: one — and that is to be emphasized — that the Spirit purposes to intercede; the other, that He intercedes "according to God"; the third that He has in mind to intercede for saints.

On intercession compare the notes above, v. 26. This intercession is "according to God," in a manner that is suitable to, in keeping with, God, since the Spirit is God. While man does not know what to pray for according to what is needful (v. 26), the Holy Spirit, who searches the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10), who together with the Father and Son has planned and mapped out the course of every Christian's life, who Himself so governs all things that they must work together for our good, this Spirit knows what the Christian ought to pray for. Therefore He shapes His prayer not in accordance with the Christian's wish and desire, with the Christian's feeble and oftentimes erroneous conception of what is good for himself, but His prayer is always in keeping with God and His plan and purpose. For this very reason His groanings are in a peculiar sense a "falling in" with God, a going forth to meet God in godlike supplication. In this respect His prayer resembles that of Christ, who also as God meets God and makes the eternal glory of His Christians the object of His prayer, John 17:9, 20, 22-24.

The Spirit "maketh intercession for saints." In spite of all their weaknesses Christians are saints. They do not belong to the class described by Paul in Rom. 8:9b. To them rather apply vv. 9a, 14-17. They are saints, recognized and acknowledged as such by the Spirit, who has sanctified them through faith, sprinkled their hearts with the blood of Jesus, guides them daily in holiness of life, and preserves them in faith unto the end. Weak, feeble, mortal men, yet saints. Mocked and ridiculed by the world, yet a holy people. Harassed by fightings without and torn by fears within, yet sanctified by the Triune God Himself. What an honor! Ought a Christian ever to despair, knowing that the Holy Spirit regards him as a saint and makes this very knowledge a motive for His intercession?

For these saints the Spirit intercedes. Again the apostle uses the word *ὑπέρ*, over. Standing over saints, the Spirit covers their



feebleness with His strength. Their sighs and lamentations, which are so often mingled with, and contaminated by, the improper mutterings of the flesh, often resemble the doubting cries of children who have lost the way, are groping in the darkness, crying out in their anguish, falling down discouraged, almost despairing. Over them He meets with God in the manner of God, covering the imperfection of their prayer with His perfection, their misunderstanding and lack of knowledge with His divine insight into God's plan. For it is His purpose to present the sighs of God's children to God as a perfect prayer.

He that searches the heart of man knows this mind of the Spirit and cannot refuse a prayer coming from the heart of the Christian as a prayer in which the Spirit of God joins with the child of God in intimate communion, so that the two become one prayer. What a powerful Intercessor we have! Ought we ever to fear or doubt the outcome of our battle with our enemies? Ought we ever to waver in our conviction that all things must work together for our good? Ought not our entire life be a never-ceasing paean of victory, an uninterrupted hymn of praise to God for having given us so powerful an ally to help us bear the burden of the sufferings of this time?

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," v. 28. "And," δέ, adds another factor, and one of immense importance. In order to enable his readers to bear their burdens patiently, the apostle now goes to the root of the matter. The life of every Christian is ruled and guided and shaped by an eternal counsel of God, linking the brief span of seventy or eighty years allotted to the child of God on earth with two eternities, humanly speaking, the eternity before the world began and the eternity after the end of the world, both being, of course, one unbroken eternity in the sight of God, to whom a thousand years are as a watch in the night, Ps. 90:4. We shall meet in vv. 28-32 with some of the boldest statements ever uttered by the mouth of man, with some of the deepest mysteries that ever engaged the human mind.

"We know," we are divinely sure, "that to those that love God. . . ." Paul very emphatically places this at the head of the sentence. "God" is not that indefinite, vague god of man's own making; "God" is the one true God of the Bible, the Triune God. "Love," ἀγαπᾶν. The verb designates that nobler love of choice which remains loyal to God even though He chastises His child ever so severely. The present participle denotes this love as one enduring, lasting. Paul knows well that there is such a thing as apostasy. Yet he is here thinking of such only as are loyal lovers of their Lord to the end. If one loves God, he may apply to



himself what the apostle says. If one loves not God, has never loved Him or has ceased to love Him, he cannot and dare not look for himself among those of whom the apostle here speaks. They that love God are Christians; cp. 1 Cor. 2:9; 3:8; Eph. 6:24; Jas. 1:12.

To them that love God "all things work together for good." What a remarkably bold statement! "All things"; the article is omitted. There is no limitation of this term. All things, good or evil, times of peace or of war, riches or poverty, the wicked plans of godless enemies and the solicitous care and ardent prayers of parents and friends, happy or unhappy wedded life, the victories or the defeats of a Christian, his righteousness and his sin — all things work together, constantly, at all times, some consciously and purposefully, some without men's knowledge and even against their will, yet work together they do, "for good." The absence of the article stresses the qualitative idea. The good for which all things work together is actually, really, good in the full sense of the term. Paul names no specific good, nor has he any particular good in mind. We do not always know just what that good is for which the vicissitudes, the ever-changing happenings of our life, work together. We often see only harm and loss and evil. But here God assures us through His apostle, All must work together for some good in connection with the final attainment of that splendid hope that we are waiting for. What a marvelous outlook on life! An outlook that makes the humblest life worth living and enriches immeasurably the happiest life. Ought a Christian ever to complain?

What gives the apostle the courage and the authority to make this bold statement? His assurance is based on the eternal counsel and will of God. All things must work together for good "to them who are the called according to His purpose." This is an exact translation of the original τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν, the present participle characterizing them as being the called ones now, still. They that are loving God are here identified as called ones. As long as they love God, so long can they be sure that they belong into the class of the called. The term "called," κλητοί, is the verbal adjective of καλέω, which means to invite, to ask one to come. So it is used, e. g., Matt. 22:3, 48 (aorist infinitive and imperative and perfect participle), v. 14 (verbal adjective). In these passages it is used of men who were invited but did not accept the invitation, although it was a sincere one, given for the purpose of having them come and enjoy the marriage dinner. Paul, however, never uses these forms in the general sense, but invariably in connection with such as have been called not only sincerely and efficaciously but effectively, in whom the purpose of God's efficacious call has been



accomplished. In this sense the readers had already been addressed as "the called of Jesus Christ," "called to be the saints," chap. 1:6, 7. Cp. 1 Cor. 1:24; Rev. 17:14. They are the called, however, not because of any merit or worthiness in them. The call extended to them was not according to our works but according to His purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 2 Tim. 1:9. In the latter passage the apostle used in connection with grace the same expression found without the *lōian* in our text, *κατ' lōian πρόθεσιν*. The effective call of God, as it was a gracious one, was not and is not in any case a haphazard, accidental call; it is always a call that stands in relation to a purpose, that owes its issuance to a determination on the part of God. God has "set before" Himself, proposed, purposed, to call those whom He actually did call. Hence the fact that they are effectively called, the fact that they have by the grace of God accepted the call, that they are now Christians, loving God, is not the reason why God purposed to call them, but the direct result of God's purpose or proposal. God purposed to call them; therefore they are called, and therefore they can exclaim, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Why? Why, they are the called according to a purpose. And if God, the unchanging God, has already in eternity purposed to call them, if God in His gracious will has thought of them and determined to make them His children in due time, then this God will not permit anything to come between us and our future salvation, not permit any creature to rob us of the consummation of our hope. This thought is carried out in irrefutable, divine logic in the next paragraph.

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A very suitable text for New Year's Day indeed. We do not know what will happen in the 365 days of 1941. One thing we do know: *All Things Work Together for Good*. For 1. we are called unto a blessed hope, vv. 28, 24, 25; 2. the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, vv. 26, 27. — *The Eternal God Is Our Refuge*. He has called us before the world began, v. 28b; He loves us with an everlasting love; vv. 24b, 26, 27; He has regenerated us to a lively hope, vv. 24, 25. — As we enter the new year, Jesus is with us. Also in the new year He sends His Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Aid. Theme: *The Spirit Helps Our Infirmity*. By pointing to our great and sure hope; by interceding for us; by reminding us of our call according to God's will. — *Comfort in Anxious Times*. We are saved in hope (therefore let us wait); we are aided by the Spirit (therefore be not discouraged); all things work together for our good (therefore be of good cheer). TH. LAETSCH