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Issue

THIRTEEN

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Wednesday, July 1, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC

Update



Happy Canada Day!

*"He shall have dominion . . . from sea to sea." (Psalm 72:8)*

## News Brief

- ❖ **Reopening:** In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and government restrictions on gatherings, our leadership has decided to wait to reopen public Sunday worship until September 13. A letter outlining and explaining this decision is being sent to all on our mailing list.
- ❖ **Online:** Our services are available here on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next, a Communion service, will be held July 5 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor John will be speaking on "Free in Christ" (Mark 9:14–29).
- ❖ **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- ❖ **Pastoral Care:** Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is: [seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com](mailto:seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com).

## All Things for the Good

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For . . . those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:28, 30–31)*

If you asked me to list some of the verses that I find most encouraging in the whole Bible, I would have to include Romans 8:28.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." But the thought that God is in control of our world is not always easy to accept.

We turn on the TV and reporters tell us about the advance of COVID-19, the latest natural disaster or terrorist attack. We see images of violence, racism, famine and war in so many different places. We pick up a newspaper or go online and read about pollution and the destruction of our environment. And in such circumstances, our natural tendency can be to despair or to throw up our hands in horror.

Closer to home, a loved one gets sick or dies. We lose a job. Kids run off the rails. A family falls apart. So we are tempted to doubt God's loving care. How could an all-powerful and loving God allow such events to happen? How can God be in control, when we seem to be falling apart at the seams?

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." It is important to note what this verse does not say, as well as what it does.

Romans 8:28 does not teach that God's people will have no problems. The biblical understanding is that ours is a fallen world, where sin, evil and all their consequences are to be expected.

The question is not so much whether we will avoid trouble in our lives as what God will do with it. And what does Romans 8:28 say? "In all things (not just some or most, but all things, whether good or bad) God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

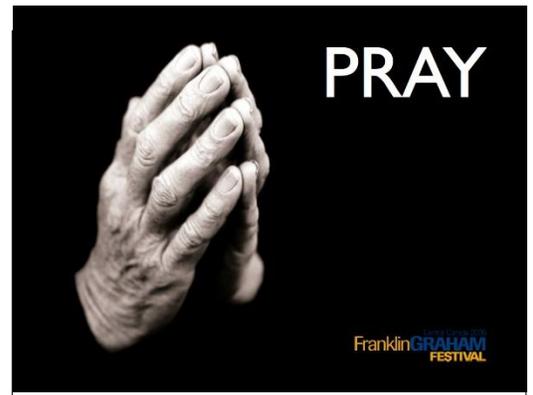
So whatever we are going through, God is with us and God can and will use our situation for our good and for God's glory. And one of the best assurances of God's constant care for us is the related promise in verses 29 to 30 that once God has called us, God will never let us go. Theologians have different views about whether everyone who truly comes to faith in Christ is bound to stay with it.

But Romans 8 could not be much clearer. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

***So secure is our standing before God that those who have been "justified," or counted guiltless, before God because of the person and work of Christ, can already be reckoned as "glorified" to a blessed eternity with God in heaven. What an amazing thought!***

This may sound quite a mouthful, but the basic meaning is clear. Salvation is ultimately God's work, Paul says, and God never fails in what God sets out to achieve. So we can be confident that if we have truly come to Christ, we will never fall away, because God will make sure of that.

In fact, so secure is our standing before God that those who have been "justified", or counted guiltless, before God because of the person and work of Christ, can already be reckoned as "glorified" to a blessed eternity with God in heaven. What an amazing thought! Here and now we can even be "citizens of heaven," to use another Pauline New Testament



phrase (Philippians 3:20).

So however our own situation may appear, however problematic and chaotic our world, God is in control. Indeed, "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." And one of the most powerful ways that God shows us that is by giving us the absolute security that once we place our trust in Christ, he will never ever disappoint us.

That is why Romans 8 can bring comfort and assurance to us all and why I personally find it so tremendously encouraging.

***Pastor John Oakes***

## Major Prayer Needs

1. Our sick & shut-ins
2. Government leaders
3. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
4. Our online services and Zoom outreach
5. All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
6. The complete defeat of COVID-19

## Zoom Meetings and Games Night



1. Pastor John and Kirsten invite Ebenezer youth and young adults to a weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. The evening will include games and quizzes. For access, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556.
2. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is studying Paul's letter to the Galatians. This week's passage is Gal. 5:13–26. To participate, please go to this link on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, using the same meeting ID when requested.
3. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. To join, please go to this link and use meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.