

## Theme: Key Questions

### Romans 8:28-32 (EHV)

<sup>28</sup> We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose, <sup>29</sup> because those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified. <sup>31</sup> What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

I would bet that when our confirmand, Natalie, read the theme of today's sermon she knew exactly what I was referring to. In fact, any of my current or former Catechism and Bible History students probably get the reference as well, and when they read the theme of our sermon, they probably all heard it in their head sounding something like a game show host saying, "Keeeeeeeeeyyyy Questions!"

You see, in the Bible History workbook we use for our 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students each lesson ends with two or three questions that highlighted some important thoughts or takeaways from the lesson. These questions at the end of each lesson were called, Key Questions. And whenever that PowerPoint slide would pop up on the screen we'd break out into some sort of fanfare maybe a drumroll, or some game show music, and a cheesy announcer's voice, or we'd make up some silly pun, like, "If your answers are locked up, you need keeey questions!" Anyway, over the years some of our students really got into introducing the Key Questions for each lesson in a fun way. Natalie was one of those students who got into it! She liked to jingle her house key whenever the Key Questions would come up (get it? 😊).

Well, over the past 3 years of classes, Natalie, you completed all 58 lessons in the Bible History workbook, and if there were an average of 2 and a half questions per lessons I estimate that you have completed approximately 145 "key questions" over the course of your confirmation instruction! Wow! That's a lot of important questions to the various Bible lessons you've read and learned about. On top of that, this past week and this morning you answered quite a few Key Questions in your written and oral examinations, in which you gave answers that showed what you've learned from the Word of God and from Luther's Catechism. And, of course, a few moments ago you answered some very important Key Questions as you publically confirmed your faith in your Savior Jesus before this congregation:

- ✠ *Do you ...intend to continue steadfast in the confession of this faith and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?*
- ✠ *Do you intend faithfully to conform all your life to the authority of the divine Word of God, to be diligent in the use of the means of grace (the Gospel in Word and Sacrament), to live a life that is fitting for the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death?*

Those are some very heavy, very serious Key Questions. How on earth could you possibly have the strength and conviction to answer those questions with a "yes"?! Well, let's remember *how* you answered those questions: "I do so intend, with the help of God," and "I do so intend, by the grace of God." You are relying on God's help and God's grace—on His strength and His love—in order to make and keep these promises you have made today.

That brings us to the Key Questions that the Apostle Paul asks in the last two verses our text, **What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him? (v. 31-32).**

These are also what we call “rhetorical” questions, that is questions that are asked to make a point of emphasis rather than to get an answer, since the answer is obvious and expected. **“What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (v. 31).** The answer of course is “no one” and “nothing” can stand against us if God is for us! That is where our confidence lies as believers. That is where your confidence lies, Natalie!

Well, that might lead us to ask some more **Key Questions**: “How do we know that ‘God is for us,’ and can we even be certain that He is on our side? How can we know that He is going to keep the promises He’s made for us here in this text and throughout the Bible?” In times of weakness or doubt we might even question if He’s on our side at all, or if He actually is doing what He promises in the first verse of our text, to make **“all things work together for the good of those who love God” (v. 28).** When we take a quick, honest inventory of our thoughts and actions we might even have good reason to question whether we really are among **“those who love God.”** And if we really don’t love God, how do we know that He is going to make **“all things work together for our good,”** and how do we know that He’s actually **“for us” (v. 31)** and on our side?

When these doubts fill our hearts and minds that’s when we need to stop looking inside our hearts and minds and start looking to what God says to us. God assures you in these verses of our text that these words do apply to you. He reminds us that we came to **“love God”** and believe in His Son Jesus not because we wanted it badly enough or made such an incredible effort on our part. No! Rather God **“called”** us to love Him and believe in His Son Jesus for our salvation. He **“called”** us to this before the world was even formed by His words. Listen to what He says of us in v. 29-30 of our text, **“because those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers.”<sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified.” (v. 29-30).**

From eternity God **“foreknew”** us. The Greek word used there indicates that God didn’t just know of us from eternity, He knew us *intimately*; He knew everything about us! And He **“predestined”** us to be His own from eternity as well. In time He used His Spirit and His Word to **“call”** us to faith in His Son Jesus, so that the **“justification”** He won for us on the cross—that “Not guilty!” verdict that God proclaimed to all mankind at Jesus’ death—would be made our own. He did this for you, Natalie. He has done this for all of us!

But did you notice something strange about the last word at the end of this list? Paul says, **“And those he justified, he also glorified” (v. 30b).** As fully forgiven, fully saved believers in Jesus we are already sharing in the glory of God and eternal life right now in this life, but we won’t fully experience being **“glorified”** until our bodies and souls reach heaven in the resurrection on the Last Day. However, Paul still uses a past tense verb, **“glorified,”** to describe a future event for us and all believers. That’s how certain our salvation is! What God Himself has done for us and has promised for our eternal future is as good as done! Believe it! He has done absolutely everything necessary to earn, secure, and keep that salvation for us forever!

Maybe you noticed that we didn’t address the other **Key Question**, the other “rhetorical” question that Paul asks in the last verse of our text. I was saving this for last because it is the ultimate, rock solid proof that God is, in fact, **“for us” (v. 31),** that He without a doubt loves us, and that we can absolutely trust Him to keep all of His promises: **“Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?” (v. 32).** Think of what Paul is saying here in this verse: If God loves you enough to sacrifice His only Son, Jesus, on that horrible cross so that you would receive heaven, how is He not going to take care of all the other things? If He loves us enough to take care of our greatest problem, our sin, which earned us death and hell, how will He not take care of all our “lesser” problems—the everyday problems, cares, and concerns we have in this life? The answer, of course, is: He will!

Natalie, you have answered many important, **Key Questions** over the course of your Bible instruction. You have answered some **Key Questions** today by making some important and solemn promises to God. But let's not forget that God has made the most important and solemn promises to you and to all of us! And He always keeps His promises!

So, Natalie, and all of you, dear fellow believers in Christ, no matter what we are facing now, or in the future; no matter what fears we have or will have later on in life; no matter what **Key Questions** crop up in the course of our life, God has promised to make **“all things work together for good” (v. 28)**. That promise is for you! Believe it! God proved it by sending His Son Jesus to take your punishment for your sin—all of your sins, each and every one of them—to take your guilt; your shame and nail it to His cross **(cf. Colossians 2:14)**. Trust in Him, rely on His strength every day of your life. As your confirmation verse reminds you, the One who declares you to be **“righteous”** will also cause you to **“flourish”** and has promised to give you His **“peace,”** spiritual peace with God through the forgiveness of sins, **“till the moon is no more” (Psalm 72:7 EHV)**.

So, Natalie, if you need answers “unlocked” as you go through life, always remember these **Keeeeeey Questions!** from the text of your confirmation sermon:

**“What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (v. 31).**

**“He [God] who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?” (v. 32).** Amen.