

## Romans 8:28-39

### Introduction:

The term *Drunkard's Walk* is used in mathematics, physics and related disciplines to describe a type of *Random Walk* or an extended series of random steps. Each step connects to the other, but the overall pattern is one of randomness; there is no real direction. The following is Leonard Mlodinow's story in *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*, a NY Times bestseller in 2008.

- Watching the Sabbath candles, thinking about the rhyme and reason that must underly the patterns of the flame.
- Father: "Life isn't like that. Sometimes things happen that cannot be foreseen."
- Father's story: He stole bread from the Buchenwald bakery. "Shoot the suspects until they are all dead or or someone confesses."
- Assuming he would be shot either way, father confessed – and was given a plum job in the bakery as the baker's assistant!
- Father's interpretation: "A chance event. It had nothing to do with you, but had it happened differently, you would never have been born."
- Len's comments: "It struck me then that I have Hitler to thank for my existence, for the Germans had killed my father's wife and two young children, erasing his prior life. And so were it not for the war, my father would never have emigrated to New York, never have met my mother, also a refugee, and never have produced me and my two brothers."
- "The outline of our lives, like the candle's flame, is continuously coaxed in new directions by a variety of random events that, along with our responses to them, determine our fate."
- Links:
  - [The Drunkard's Walk on Amazon.com](#)
  - [Leonard Mlodinow on YouTube](#)
  - [Home Page at Caltech](#)

**To avoid a totally random life, get in touch with God's plans for you. He works in accordance with His plans; He plans in accordance with His love.**

- I. God is always working for our good. 8:28
- II. He works in accordance with His plans. 8:29-30
- III. He plans in accordance with His love. 8:31-39

- I. God is always working for our good. 8:28

A. 8:28      *work together*      cooperate    "synergize"

i. Some manuscripts have "*all things work together*", some have *God works all things together*. In either case all would agree that God is the one at work behind the scenes.

- Evil is obvious in our fallen world, but God is able to turn every circumstance around for our good in the long run.
- We are "the called" if we're following Jesus. Our security is in heaven, not on earth.

Psalms 37:23-24 (NKJV) The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.

II. He works in accordance with His plans. 8:29-30

A. Regarding the whole predestination controversy:

*“But the foreknowledge of God, which Paul mentions, is not a bare prescience [knowing facts before they happen], as some unwise persons absurdly imagine, but the adoption by which he had always distinguished his children from the reprobate.” – John Calvin*  
*See his commentary [here](#).*

i. Mr Calvin does have a point. Take for example what God says to Jeremiah:

*Jeremiah 1:5 (NKJV) “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

ii. That certainly sounds like a lot more than God knowing in advance the kind of person Jeremiah would eventually become. On the other hand, we can read Calvin's own footnote in his commentary:

*“Many of the Fathers, such as Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theodoret, regarded it [foreknowledge in Romans 8:29] in the sense of simple prescience, as having reference to those who would believe and obey the gospel.”*

iii. We might also consider John Wesley, who lived later than Calvin. In Calvin's mind, he would qualify as an “unwise person” for “absurdly imagining” the following:

*“God foreknew those in every nation, those who would believe, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things.” – John Wesley, in the sermon On Predestination.*  
*See entire sermon [here](#).*

iv. Let's also consider that Jeremiah had to submit himself to God's perfect will:

*Jeremiah 1:5-9 (NKJV) <sup>5</sup>“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”*

*<sup>6</sup>Then said I: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.”*

*<sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.*

*<sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the LORD.*

*<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.*

**Three things to beware of:**

1. **Fatalism:** The belief that all events are predetermined and are therefore inevitable. This is not a biblical view, but Christian can fall into it. Then they don't pray, don't evangelize, etc.

*“I'm not a fatalist. But even if I were, what could I do about it?” -Emo Philips, comedian*

2. **Lack of Trust:** Sometimes, in the guise of diligence or faithfulness, we begin to take too much responsibility upon ourselves. Then we stress out. At this point we reveal a lack of faith in God's overriding sovereignty. In this passage Paul is trying to prevent this.

3. **Suitcase theology:** (Richard Averbeck's term) This is when we pack Bible verses into our theological framework like more clothes into a bulging suitcase. “It has to fit somehow!”

### One Thing to Focus on:

- **God's goals should be our goals.** God's ultimate goal for us is to make us like Christ, but we need to intentionally cooperate with God's plans.

*1 John 3:2-3 (NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

*<sup>3</sup>And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

- As we become more and more like Jesus, we actually discover our true selves, the persons we were created to be. By reading and heeding his Word, by being filled with his Spirit, and by going out there and doing his work in the world, God will continually mature us – and His plan, which will be accomplished, will be to glorify us in the end. (See also *Handbook of Bible Application*)

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III. He plans in accordance with His love. 8:31-39

A. 8:31 This is a verse worth highlighting and remembering.

B. 8:32 God already gave His Son for us. The OT (LXX) uses the same wording here:

*Genesis 22:12 (NKJV) And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have **not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**"*

C. 8:33 Think about this: God is our ultimate judge. No accusation against us is going to stand because He is the one who has chosen us and He is the one who has justified us. In justifying us He was eliminating all trace of our sin. This doesn't ignore our spiritual failures; it takes away their force.

- It is wrong to ignore our spiritual failures. It is also wrong to be obsessed with them.

D. 8:34 Take special note of our complete dependence upon Christ:

- i. Christ, who is not dead but lives
- ii. Christ, who is not weak, but is enthroned in power
- iii. Christ, who is not indifferent to our needs, but who cares enough to make our concerns known to God through intercession.

E. 8:35 Paul experienced all of this during the course of his ministry:

*2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (NKJV) 23...in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness...*

And he's the same guy who writes v.37

F. 8:37 *more than conquerors* Literally, “we hyper-conquer” We don't just win, we win decisively. This is not a game in which everyone is on the edge of their seats. This is a blowout – and we win. The world (in the negative sense), the flesh and the devil all lose.

G. 8:38-39 Paul's Final Point: God's love. Two things to remember:

- i. **God's love is beyond measure.** The church in Rome soon underwent terrible persecution. In just a few years, Paul's hypothetical situations would turn into painful realities. This passage reaffirms God's profound love for his people. No matter what happens to us, no matter where we are, we can never be lost to his love. Suffering should not drive us away from God; it should help us to identify with him further and allow his love to reach us and heal us.
- ii. **God's love is eternal.** These verses contain one of the most comforting promises in all Scripture. Believers have always had to face hardships in many forms: persecution, illness, imprisonment, even death. These could cause them to fear that they have been abandoned by Christ. But Paul exclaims that it is impossible to be separated from Christ. His death for us is proof of his unconquerable love. Nothing can stop Christ's constant presence with us. God tells us how great his love is so that we will feel totally secure in him. If we believe these overwhelming assurances, we will not be afraid.

(See also *Handbook of Bible Application*)

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### Conclusion:

Like Leonard Mlodinow's parents, Corrie ten Boom (1892 – 1983) was another Holocaust survivor. She and her family were Christians imprisoned by the Nazis for hiding Jews in Holland. You may have heard of her book *The Hiding Place* which was made into a movie by Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures. She was released from a concentration camp on the last day of 1944 and spent the rest of her life sharing her experiences and telling people about Jesus. Years later she revisited the camp and there found out that her release was due to a clerical error – a seemingly random event. Other women her age were all killed a week later in the camp. It was tempting at that point to ask “What if...?” Here's how Corrie responded to that:

*“There are no 'ifs' in God's Kingdom. His timing is perfect. His will is our hiding place. Lord Jesus, keep me in Your will! Don't let me go mad by poking around outside it.”*

– *The Hiding Place p.221*

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- [The Hiding Place DVD](#)
- [US Holocaust Memorial Museum Article](#)
- [The Hiding Place Museum, Haarlem, Holland](#)