

Good From All Things!

Romans 8:22-28

September 22, 2024

Please open your Bibles today to Romans 8.

What has 15 actors, four settings, two writers, and one plot? 632 Hallmark movies. How many of you like them? No self-respecting guy is going to raise his hand for that, right? Unless his wife digs her elbow into his ribs. Hallmark movies are known for their beautiful settings, entrancing romances, and happily ever afters. If only life was like that. There is a sense in which it can be. Ultimately, for believers, we have been promised good from God. To hear about it, please stand as we read from Rom 8:22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. 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.

Romans 8 is one of the greatest chapters in the whole Bible. What a rich gold mine of truth from which we could extract nuggets for many sermons. J. Vernon Magee once said, "If Romans is the greatest book of the Bible, and chapter 8 is the high-water mark, then verse 28 is the pinnacle." I'm not worthy to preach on it today, but with God's grace, we're going to focus on that verse. Although we discussed and studied it when we did our Bible Study on the book of Romans, and although we mention this passage from time to time in messages, I didn't realize until I checked this week that I haven't actually preached on this passage since 1997 27 years ago. So I think we can revisit it today without becoming too redundant.

Romans 8:28 is one of the greatest distillations of Biblical truth. Although the principles here are taught throughout the Bible, Paul brings it all together and states it plainly and boldly so that it's impossible to miss. Let's begin with All things. Say all things. Not some things. Not even most things. All things. The good, the bad, the ugly things. The healthy, the sick, the painful things. The prosperous and successful things, the failure and poverty things. Intentional things others have done to hurt us. Bombs, murders, terrorism, thefts, gossip, hatred, etc. As well as unintentional things that hurt us

like car wrecks, negligence, or when someone sideswipes our reputation without even knowing it. Even vicious attacks of the enemy, God can turn into our good. All things. This even includes our own intentional sins we have committed that have hurt us or others. God is able to work ALL things together for our good.

Say together. All things work **together** for our good, not individually. A baker puts many ingredients into a cake. Some of them taste horrible by themselves, yet when she blends them together in the right proportions and bakes them at the right temperature, wow! Double chocolate! Red velvet, etc. So it is with all the experiences in our lives. Some things aren't good by themselves. They just aren't. And the Bible doesn't say they are. The fire that took my mother's life was not good! But I will praise God for the good that came from it! Death is not good. Yet for Christians, God is able to bring good from death even though there is still pain and heartache. Our sin is never good, but God is able to take even the wrong notes we play and incorporate them into a beautiful symphony of praise! For our good and His glory!

Say Good. Harold Martin wrote, "Not all things work together necessarily to make us healthy or happy or popular. It may not be good for us to have health, wealth, or popularity..." Who knew? We don't even know what's good for us. Some things we think are horrible are actually good and vice versa. As Phil Wentz used to say, "We don't know a good day from a bad one." But God does. He knows what is good for us and what isn't and He is not only able to work all things together for our good, He does it on a daily basis! For some benefit for us. Even if we don't perceive it. Even if we don't think it. Even if we don't understand it, He's doing it right now.

Notice it doesn't say God causes all things. There are clearly some things that are not God's will. Diddy's sex trafficking, Hamas' attack on Israel, Covid, etc. But even these He is able to weave into something good for you. He is the Master Weaver, able to take whatever various colored threads come to our wounded lives and make a beautiful tapestry. Of course we can only see things from the underside, from our earthly perspective. Rugs aren't pretty underneath. But in heaven, the surpassing beauty will become readily apparent.

Can God control all things? Yes. But He has given human beings free will. Adam used his free will to rebel against Him and so we live in a fallen universe in which we have tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, landslides, and other natural disasters that damage property and kill people. None of that was God's plan. Now the Bible is clear that He can use those things to punish and/or accomplish His will. But even in all of these, He's able to take the broken pieces shattered by floods or fires or whatever and recreate a vase that is even more beautiful than the original.

Cancer was never part of God's plan. Nor was any disease. These are not good in and of themselves. And yet even these God's able to use for His glory and our

good. How many people have come to faith in Jesus when staring death in the face? How many Christians have brought God glory by staying faithful to Him in the midst of great suffering and pain? And through that, others have been saved. Or our faith deepened, etc. He will hold you fast! He's promised!

Fanny Crosby lost her eyesight to a doctor's mistake when she was very young. She was blind the rest of her life. Instead of becoming bitter against him or God, she sought the good and ended up writing nearly 9000 hymns for the church to sing including many of our favorites Blessed Assurance, Near the Cross, Rescue the Perishing, Praise Him Praise Him, and To God be the Glory!

God can take the worst the world throws at you and turn it to good. I know it's easy for me to preach when I'm relatively healthy. But Biblical truth doesn't depend on what I'm going through right now. Amen? Truth doesn't depend on our feelings or our situations. It depends on God! That's what makes this so powerful! That's what enables it to encourage and empower us in the midst of the storms when they come. But we have to learn it and implant and solidify it in our souls in the good times so that its truth can benefit us in the bad times. They put devices in some cancer patients to provide internal radiation treatments. God's Word is like that. But you have to get it in there. Implant it in your soul so that it can impact and affect you. So that it can take every negative thought captive as it arises. So that it can steer our minds and even our emotions knowing that God is at work to bring our ultimate good.

This is a blessed precious promise we can put our full weight on. That can help us through the most difficult times in life. Through periods of the most intense suffering, grief, and pain. Dr. Reuben Torrey calls this verse a soft pillow for a tired heart. Harold Marin wrote, "... when heartaches come and bitter tears fall, and we sit by the bedside of a dearly loved family member, and hold a fevered hand, and even should we need to follow a small white casket out into the silent city of the dead—we can turn away from these experiences and look up into the face of God and say, "We KNOW that all things work together for good of those who love God." And he had experienced all of those things. Truly we have a wonderful, merciful Savior who is also big and strong enough to turn every wrong into something good. He is almighty! Amen? To Him be the glory!

Romans 8:28 is a great and precious promise!! Memorize it! Hide it in your heart that you might be encouraged and that you might not stay angry or bitter with Him when something bad happens. Look for the good. Is this truth always easy to remember? Not at all! But remember in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Remember this promise when bad times come. The Holy Spirit is praying this for us as the previous verses assure us. Remember that He will hold you fast.

Say we know. We know this, Paul says! We don't think it, we don't guess it, we don't wish it. This is not a theory. We know that we know that we know it! There's no

thinking about it. This is a settled Biblical truth upon which we can build our theology of God and of life! Of calamity as well as prosperity. When suffering, we can easily conclude that God either doesn't love us or can't protect us. Neither of these are true. But He can and He is working through these to produce something for our good. The question is, "Do **you** know it?" Are you convinced of this spiritual truth that is spelled out clearly on this page of the holy Scripture? I don't mean do you know this verse by heart. Many of us do. I mean do you believe it to be true? Does it provide hope and peace and comfort and assurance when the world around you is collapsing, imploding, falling apart, and burning down? Paul indicates this truth is common knowledge of every Christian, either by common sense, Spirit revelation, or through the Word. There is nothing that can happen to you that is beyond God's ability to repurpose into something glorious! Nothing is going to happen to you that God can't bring good out of. Ultimate good. Perfect good. Better good than what you are now experiencing.

But this promise is not made to everyone. There are some stipulations attached. It is only true for those who meet two qualifications. 1. Say love God. We have to love Him. Do you love God? Do you love the things of God? Or do you love the things of this world? If you had what you really wanted more than anything else, what would it be? Money? New car? Bigger house? Health? Power? Love? Sex? Or God? Oh yes, George, I love God. Good. But if we love God, we'll treat this Bible like a love letter from our dearest sweetheart and cherish every word of it. Jesus said if we love Him, we'll obey Him. If we love Him, we'll be in His presence every chance we get. Daily devotions, weekly worship, and as we mentioned last week, Sunday School and Bible Study. When you really love someone, you can't get enough of them. You crave their voice, their smile, just being together with them.

Love for God means you'll love what He loves. I wasn't real crazy about the Pioneer Woman. But because Nancy liked her décor, guess what? I've learned to like it too. Because I love Nancy. There's some TV shows I've learned to like because she likes them. But not yet Hallmark. If we love God, we'll love what He loves! What does He love? He loves truth, justice, mercy and grace. He loves the poor and those who are suffering. He loves little children, those in the womb and those out of it. He loves the church and gave Himself up for her. Do we love what He loves? 1 Cor 2:9 promises us, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." Do you love Him? That's stipulation number 1.

Stipulation number 2. Say called. We must be called according to His purpose. What does that mean? Other translations say, "The called." Paul addresses this letter of Romans in 1:6-7 to "...those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints." A Gospel Light quarterly stated that, "God calls all mankind, but they are not truly "the called" until they **respond** to His calling." You have to be saved. This promise is not for an unsaved person. Or for

someone trying to thwart God's purposes or who is living to satisfy and glorify him or herself. It is for the saved who are seeking to advance God's Kingdom and His purposes. You have to have accepted Jesus as Savior. If you haven't done that, ignore everything I've said today. It doesn't apply to you until you do. But if you have been saved, be encouraged! Be refreshed! Take hope and joy! God is able to work all things together for your good!

So if this is true, and it is, our prayer in hard times, Myron Augsburger has said, becomes not, "Get me out of this, Lord," but rather, "Lord, what can I get out of this?" Each day I pray, "Teach me whatever you want me to know. To learn, to be." Help me to trust that you have a plan and a purpose and nothing the devil nor any other person can throw at me can cancel that. Help me glorify You through it. I'm not saying it's easy. It's not. Some of you are better at it than me without a doubt. But either it's true or it's not and if you know that it is true, it can pull you through the worst that comes your way. I've seen God bring good out of death, disaster, divorce, disease, and disappointment. I've seen Him bring good out of sickness and sorrow. And if it hasn't happened yet for you, be patient. The cake may still be in the oven. Vs 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Patiently waiting for the good God will bring!

Either this is true or it's not. Either Paul is right or he's living in a dream world. You choose. But here's the thing. If you choose to erase this verse or concept, you'd better have a big eraser because Romans 8:28 is the story of the whole Bible. Moses' murder led to his time in the desert which prepared him to lead Israel out! In Deut 8:16, it says that God gave the Israelites manna to humble and test them so that in the end it might go well with them. When Naomi's husband and two sons died, God restored and planted her in the ancestry of the Messiah. Although David was frustrated at times having to wait to become king, God was building his wisdom and experience so he could be successful when it happened. David's adultery with Bathsheba resulted in King Solomon and eventually Jesus! In Jer 24:6, God promises the Jews going into exile, "My eyes will watch over them for their good..." But the clearest picture of this in the Old Testament is Gen 50:21 where Joseph tells his abusive, hateful, ornery brothers who sold him into slavery, "You meant to harm me, but God meant it for good..."

In the New Testament, John's imprisonment on Patmos resulted in the book of Revelation. Paul who wrote this verse had seen it happen many times in his own life. He and Barnabas' disagreement resulted in two missionary trips instead of just one. On another trip, because Paul's first two choices were blocked, he ended up planting the first church in Europe at Philippi. And sitting in prison he wrote in Phil 1:19, "what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." If you erase Rom 8:28, you better have a huge eraser! For even better than Hallmark, God has one plot throughout history! Bringing good from all things for His people!

Nowhere is this principle seen more clearly than in the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For in this, God was able to use even the hatred and evil of the Pharisees and Romans to accomplish His ultimate plan to save all willing to receive His gift of eternal life. He was able to take the very worst sin ever and turn it into the sweetest ransom for all. This greatest good from evil is what makes Rom 8:28 possible for those who are the called. So are you one of them? Have you answered His call and been saved? If not, do that today as we pray!