

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

In The Grip of God's Grace

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Romans 8:28 - "All Things Working Together For Good"

Romans 8:28-30, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

Many times when Corrie ten Boom would speak to a group, she would hold up an embroidered bookmark which had lots of frayed and tangled threads which hung from the bottom. She would then show them that these frayed tangled threads seemed to have no meaningful design or purpose. Then she would turn the bookmark over and embroidered beautifully on the front side were the words, "God is Love."

It seems that often our lives, like the embroidered bottom of bookmark, are the haphazard results of blind chance.

However, if you are a child of God, you not only have a new life, a new relationship, a new hope, and a new help. Now, you have a new knowledge (vs. 28)

As Christians we have absolute assurance of God's providential care. All that comes into our lives is under control of our all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving father.

Romans 8:28 is one of the greatest and most comforting statements in the entire Bible.

From verses 28 to 39, the Apostle Paul soars to sublime heights unequalled elsewhere in the New Testament. The focus of his closing climax in Romans 8 is the security of God's people; on account of the un-changeability of God's purpose and steadfastness of His love.

Paul said in Philippians 1:6

Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"

There are five facts about God's providential care:

1. The certainty of His providential care.

(vs., 28) *"And we know..."*

Notice the contrast of this verse with that of verse 26 – *"...we know not..."*

Deuteronomy 29:29, *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God:..."*

(vs. 28) *"...we know..."* Not: we see, we feel But, *"...we know..."*

How"

By faith – we take God at His Word (His Person and Promises)

It's the believer's assurance

Philippians 1:6, *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"*

John Wesley was dealing with a friend one day, while walking in the country. His friend said, I don't believe God's promises and I don't see how it's going to work for good; I'm discouraged and everything looks dim. As he spoke John notice a cow nearby with its head over a stone wall and like a flash a revelation came to him and he said, "See that cow with its head over the stone wall?" His friend said, "Yes". John continued, "Do you also notice that the cow can't see through the stone wall? - That's why the he's looking over the stone wall.

Many times we are trying to look through the stone wall, to look as men see; rather than to take God at His word!

Someone wrote in a poem, "I know not where His islands lift, Their fronded palms in air; I only know I cannot drift, Beyond His love and care."

2. The extent of His providential care

(vs. 28) *"...all things..."*

What does all things mean?

All Things! – Every event of our life is under His beneficent sovereign control.

All things would include: suffering (vs. 17) and groaning (vs. 23)

Bereavement, illness, disappointment, children who cause us pain, lack of fruit in Christian service...

J. Oswald Sanders – The circumstances of the Christian's life are ordained of God. There is no such thing as chance. Love refuses to believe that God is not interested in every detail of life. Everything is permitted and designed by Him for wise purposes. He will not cease His supervision for a moment."

John Montgomery Boice – His father gave him a watch with a transparent back.

Jesus said,

Luke 12:6-7, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

So don't be afraid – God is in control!

3. The harmony of His providential care

(vs. 28) "...work together..."

Notice that it's God who is working

– things by themselves do not work together for good

William Barclay – "We knew that God intermingles all things for good for them that love Him."

His work is continuous and purposeful – He doesn't stop

Illustrations: - The seasons

- A painter – God is the Master Painter

What's the goal or purpose?

4. The results of His providential care

(vs. 28) "...for good..."

Why is God working in all things in my life?

For good!

In the context of Romans 8, the ultimate goal and meaning of this phrase "good" is Glorified (vs. 30)

The process is in verse 29 where it says, that we are being "...conformed to the image of his Son..."

I believe the “good” in verse 28 is just that, being “...conformed to the image of his Son...”

And God’s purpose will ultimately be completed in glorification.

The moment you are saved God starts sanctifying you, making you like Jesus.

Sanctification begun is glorification completed.

John Montgomery Boice – To be like Jesus (vs. 29) – when?
Glorified (vs. 30)

It’s possible for there to be a good use of bad things in our lives.

2 Corinthians 12 – Paul had a thorn in the flesh – *a messenger of Satan to buffet me.*

It was given to Paul to keep him humble,

Very often, God will not allow us to see the good He’s doing in our lives to keep us humble.

What is good?

- a thorn in the flesh (bad?)
- humility (good)

How does God accomplish His purposes in us? Through suffering

People ask me why bad things happen to good people.

1. what’s a bad thing?
2. what’s a ‘good people’?
3. Who determines what is bad and who determines what is good?

The Bible says,

“... all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23).

“There is none righteous, no, not one”: (Romans 3:10).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jerimiah 17:9)

I don't know where you find these 'good people'.

We also know that what we call 'bad' God may call 'good.'
And what we call 'good', God may call 'bad'.

These circumstances force me to my knees – that is good!

J. Oswald Sanders – Every adverse experience when rightly received can carry its quota of good. Bodily – pain and weakness cause us to feel our frailty. Perplexity reveals our lack of wisdom. Financial and failure humble our pride. All these things can be included in the term good.

5. The objects of His providential care

– this is where the verse is limited

It's unlimited in 'all things'

1. (vs. 28) *"... to them that love God..."*

It's limited in that it's only for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Romans 5:5, "...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

The human side – Our part:

The most important goal in the life of a Christian is to love God

Deuteronomy 6:5, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

1 John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us."

Our love for God is our response to His love for us.

2. (vs. 28) *"...the called according to his purpose."*

What does that mean? See verse 30

John R.W. Stott – God's love for us found expression in his eternal purpose and his historical call. So God has a saving purpose, and is working in accordance with it. Life is not the random mess which it may sometimes appear.

Refers to Christians only!

Paul is not expressing a general superficial optimism that everything tends to everybody's good in the end.

The good is the believers completed salvation (vs. 30) glorified!

We know because God has promised it in His word.

We have many examples of it in Scripture:

Jacob/Joseph – Joseph was gone; Reuben was disgraced; Judah was dishonored; Simeon and Levi had broken his heart; Dinah was defiled; Simeon even now was in prison; beloved Rachel was dead; famine threatened the family. Then came the demand from Egypt that young Benjamin must appear there before its awesome governor before any further supplies would be released. Old Jacob wept; “Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me” (Gen. 42:36) How wrong he was! “These things” and many more were secretly working to his own good, as the end of the story proved. “All things work together for good.”

Jeremiah – Jeremiah wrote in God's name a letter to the Jews in Babylonian exile after the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem: ‘ “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” ‘

Paul – Philippians 1:12, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;”

Jesus – The ultimate expression of this text *is the cross and His crucifixion*. Saint Augustine said that, “God rather than not to allow evil to exist, chose rather to allow good to come out of evil. – That's the cross!

The same concurrence of human evil and divine plan had its most conspicuous display in the cross, which Peter attributed both to the wickedness of men and to ‘God's set purpose and foreknowledge.

The Divine Weaver

My Life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me;
I cannot choose the colours
He worketh steadily.

Oftimes He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride,
Forget that He seeth the upper,
And I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand,

As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

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