

God Works His Glorious Purpose

Text: Romans 8.28

Theme: God's glorious purpose is worked for good in all things for His people

Introduction — As I have pointed out, one said Romans—Himalayas of Scripture

- grand, majestic mountain range of truth and revelation, of hope, assurance, and doctrine
- if Romans is the Himalayas, then Romans 8 is like Mount Everest
- towering above all other mountains, highest in the world
- btw, if you'd like to know what this is like, talk to Christopher and David Peterson
- just over a month ago, they hiked to the base camp of Everest
- while not climbing to the peak, they were oh so close and saw it with own eyes
- I'm sure they would love to show you photos of their trip!
- and, if Romans 8 is the Mount Everest of the Bible, then v. 28 is the pinnacle
- and here we are, reaching the peak at last
- all else flows and follows from this grand verse
- I'll just settle here for one Sunday and move on through to v. 39, end of chapter
- but MLJ once preach 36 sermons on Romans 8.17–39; 23 devoted to 28–39!
- you truly could spend a lifetime mining the great nuggets of truth & doctrine found here

Some of what is found here, in final verses, is strongest & most comforting portions of Bible

- here, in v. 28, it begins with declaration that everything is worked for good of God's people
- those who have been called by Him... God works for them always
- then, as we'll see, Lord willing, in vv. 29–30, there are five amazing, glorious truths
- these are great things God has done for these who are called by His grace
- on the heels of these magnificent works come five questions
- these five questions are unanswerable, and in that, they bring us great assurance
- certainty that nothing can separate God's people from God's spectacular love for us

So, as turn to this text, let us prepare hearts & minds to hear & receive

- may Lord be pleased to strengthen our faith
- may He grant us grace to grow in image of Christ
- may He open our eyes to see how He works all things for good of those called
- called according to His marvelous and sublime glory

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Let's pray...

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voices but your own, so that we may hear your Word and also do it; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

No argument that our world is a mess

- our nation, our state, even, seems to be turned upside down and inside out
- truth is, apparently, passé, out of style; make up your own truth

Then we read this verse

- for many, rather than bringing immediate comfort, they think: Really? How can this be right?
- world is filled with hatred and evil
- people suffering all over, even those who are good people
- yet Paul says, right here, “We know that in all things God works for the good...”
- But do we know it?

Of course we do...when things ARE good & going well

- have good job or stable retirement
- families are healthy and all get along
- when no one is sick or no one has died
- in times like these, easy to say:
- we know that for those who love God all things work together for good

But what about when they are not

- job is lost or threatened
- family torn over various issues
- disease strikes, doctor’s prognosis not good, treatments seem to take life right out of you
- what about then?
- oh, you say you know this truth, but do you doubt in your inner being?
- are you depressed, agonizing and sad, despairing in times like these?

Then these are the words you need to know

- not simply giving them a mental nod of approval
- but knowing them in your experience currently, even from the past
- you need to know with assured faith that God is working
- and working every single detail of life for your good & His glory

So let’s take this truth to heart and know...

I. WE KNOW THAT GOD IS AT WORK

- many people believe in fate, karma, chance and other such things
- sadly, even too many believing Christians think that God acts like some cosmic machine
- God put things in order, flipped the switch, and let’s nature run its course
- even some here today may hear the words of Romans 8.28 and think its just a system
- but that is certainly not the case at all, in this world nor in Scripture
- no, God tells us very straightforward that His sovereign providence is at work

1. Confession of the church for ages has been this

- English baptists put it like this in their confession of faith
- **God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, arranges, and governs all creatures and things, from the greatest to the least, by his perfectly wise and holy providence, to the purpose for which they were created. He governs according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will. His providence leads to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.**
- in other words, there are no laws of “nature” in action
- it is the living God who is at work ceaselessly, energetically, and purposefully
- His hand guides and leads and shapes and directs all things

- yes, there are things established that work the same way all the time
- pi will always be 3.141 on into infinity
- 2+2 will always equal 4, despite the fools who try to deny it
- two atoms of hydrogen plus one of oxygen will always be water
- all the result of God's providence; nothing happens automatically without God's hand

2. All things work this way because it is God who works them

- stars in their courses above
- movements and changes in weather operate according to God's willing them to do so
- from simplest of creatures to most complex...all by God's working
- all affairs & dealings of men & women operate in same way
- your conception...willed of God
- your development in mother's womb...by His working
- our coming out and going in...under God's very active providence
- **Proverbs 16:9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.**
- every plan you make comes from God's working
- **Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.**
- as much as we might wish it so, God ordains, wills and puts governors and governments in
- **Isaiah 40:23 who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.**
- from the smallest details to grandest schemes
- from commonplace happenings to startlingly grand events
- **Acts 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.**

3. Psalm 139

- no time to read this all, but it is one of the surest proofs in Scripture that God works actively
- He knows all you & I are going to before we do it
- we cannot escape from His gaze
- His guiding & protecting hand is everywhere as well
- so, let us submit to our sovereign God & His providential working in ALL things of our lives

Looking at this v. 28, we build on this and see that...

II. WE KNOW THAT GOD IS AT WORK FOR GOOD

- with God's working, what does He have in mind for us?
- Paul tells us: "All things work together for good"
- now, most people think things like good health, success in work or business
- long life or strong families comes to mind, and these are certainly good things
- however, we can think of long list of good things, but they may not be the best for us
- but we aren't left wondering what is good, what is best; God tells us
- **v. 29 For those He foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son**
- there is a certain end, a grand & glorious purpose to how God calls us & works for us
- now we'll see this in a moment, but we know what God is doing & for whom He's doing it
- for those who love Him and are the called ones according to His purpose
- so be sure of this: if you are in Christ, God is working, actively, even at this very moment
- and His working is the best thing for you, even in trying or really hard circumstances
- why? Because He is at work shaping you to look like Christ

- God began a good work in you when He called you to Himself by grace in Christ
- and He is still at work for your good...in all things...in every single thing
- know this also: Paul is not saying tragedies, heartaches of life guarantee a better set of circumstances
- sometimes they do; sometime they do not
- God has not promised you health, wealth and prosperity
- no, He is committed to your good...making you like His Son
- so, whatever it takes to do that, He will do

This means that we know something else that is grand and glorious...

III. WE KNOW THAT GOD IS AT WORK FOR GOOD IN ALL THINGS

- when I take a piece of wood, or several pieces for that matter, to make a bowl...
- it doesn't even look like a bowl when I start
- but in my mind, I have something in mind, what I want it to look like in the end
- [hold up round blank, chuck of cherry, strips of wood]
- it starts like this
- then I begin cutting, shaping, gouging, making a large pile of curls & chips & sawdust
- much gets left on my garage floor, but in the end, it looks like a bowl
- [hold up bowl, plate, and large bowl]
- this is what God is doing in all things in our lives as He works for our good
- He knows what He wants us to look like in the end: His Son, Jesus Christ
- we don't start out that way, but He must cut away, grind away, take away what doesn't look like Christ
- and what is left is a thing of great glory, both to you and to God
- some of your are rough, uncut, and don't look like that at all
- but God promises to work every single thing, event, happening for this purpose & your good
- if we misuse Romans 8.28, we're left with what think should be good
- but God has just told us what the good is: looking like His Son
- therefore, He will do everything to get us to look like Jesus

There is a boundary that comes to this teaching however, for...

IV. WE KNOW THAT GOD IS AT WORK FOR GOOD IN ALL THINGS FOR BELIEVERS

- Romans 8.28 is not a blanket promise for just any one person
- it is not for everyone; it is restricted, limited, discriminatory
- Romans 8.28 applies to only one group of people
- this group carries two descriptions, but don't get it wrong: it is still just a singular group
- those who have this most excellent promise are:
- those who love God
- and the ones God has called; in other words, those God has summoned to be His people
- in v. 30, they are the called ones, so we'll consider those that love God
- throughout Romans, so far, when love is mentioned, it is God's love for us
- now, for first time, Paul writes of our love for God
- of course, there are many things we can love, but the focus here is on the ultimate object
- all other things can disappoint if we love them more than God
- all those other things will perish and pass away
- this love of ours is directed solely to our God, our Creator, the One who first loved us
- so, this verse is only for the Christian

- do you love God?
- have you known His great love for you demonstrated in Christ's atoning work on cross?
- have you come under it's sustaining power?
- and now, you seek to return it as a mirror reflects its object?
- if so, then you know—past, present & future knowing—that God is actively seeking your good
- you have been chosen by God for no other reason than that He chose you
- He knew you and chose you, predestined you, made you one of His elect
- we'll look at this more next week
- and if you don't like the Bible teaching on election, predestination and God's choosing...
- well, you could choose to simply not show up
- but you really ought to come and hear what the Bible says regarding these matters
- not me, not my opinions or those of someone else, but from God Himself
- and before that day arrives, I'd ask you to pray that I not stray or veer away from Scripture
- let's have our love for God grounded in His Word

Well, time is fleeting and we need see one more thing...

V. WE KNOW THIS IS GOD'S GLORIOUS PURPOSE

- this is the grand theme of this verse and those that follow: God's purpose
- this is the will of God, His decree, what He ordains
- the Confession reads: From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself. He did this by the perfectly wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably.
- God decreed, before He ever created, that He would choose the likes of you to be His own
- He will that you come under the convicting work of the Holy Spirit
- God ordained that His grace be lavished upon an undeserving sinner
- The Son obeyed that will perfectly by coming to earth, keeping God's righteous demands
- He humbly and willing went to the cross on your behalf
- Holy Spirit then, showing it all in God's Word, put a new heart in you to receive it
- this very same Spirit, then, not only grants you the certain assurance of this
- He is working to hold you, keep you, and deliver you on that final day in glory
- this is what God is up to in this world, in your life, in this church, even
- actively, purposefully, sovereignly carrying out His divine purpose to save a people for Himself
- and that people He will deliver, through His Son & working of His Spirit, into eternity

Conclusion – I hope you see why such a short time is totally inadequate to cover all this

- v. 28 contains in its words and between its lines, nearly the whole scope of Scripture
- if you were asked, "What is the Bible all about?" You could use Romans 8.28
- God set forth a plan, when He created, to redeem sinners, who would love Him and be His forever and ever because of Jesus Christ His Son
- this is the sovereign grace of God majestically displayed for us
- when you see it all here, how can you be sorrowful for long
- this is glory