

Romans: Grace and Faith
“According to His Purpose”
Romans 8:28

Review last few weeks...

- **I am a child of God, an heir with Christ, a citizen of heaven, an ambassador to earth, with authority and power delegated to me by my Father, the Creator of all things.**

Today’s verse is a very famous passage.

- Famous because it’s often difficult as to know when to quote it.
- Famous because some people believe it MUST not mean what it appears to mean, based on life experience.
- Famous because it falls within the context of understanding suffering.
- And famous because, from one theologian to the next, you get a different meaning!

Rom 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.

First world problems...

- I always seem to have Wifi issues
- My car’s air conditioner isn’t working
- One of the faucets at home is leaking
- My computer froze right in the middle of my video game
- A burner on my stove went out
- None of my 20 pairs of shoes match my outfit
- I’m having a bad hair day
- A button fell off my shirt
- My husband never cleans up after himself
- My wife nags me too much
- My 3 bedroom house isn’t good enough
- My car isn’t big enough
- My phone isn’t new enough
- My TV isn’t big enough
- There’s “nothing” to eat in my pantry
- There’s no ice cream and I’m already in my PJ’s...
- My girlfriend is moody
- My boyfriend is selfish
- My parents are strict
- My children are difficult
- My friends were all rude to me yesterday
- My pastor made me stand up and talk in church today!

Now, here’s what we tend to do when we recognize we are guilty of a poor perspective on life:

- We laugh, because we relate
- We think about **maybe** changing our perspective
 - We envision 3rd-world children starving, without shoes, malnourished...

- But then we start feeling like we're being guilt-tripped
 - And that's the only excuse we need to start backpedaling back to our American reality.
- "It's not like I have to give up this life."
- "I was born here."
- "I have to live and keep up with society to "make it by" in America"
- "but yeah, I should probably give more to the poor."
- "But I can't afford it – what am I willing to live without?"
- And then something distracts you...
 - And then next thing you know, you've forgotten about your poor perspective, and your first world problems become big again.

The point of today's passage is threefold:

- 1) To gain a greater perspective on what can be labeled true hardships**
- 2) To KNOW what "good" really means**
- 3) To walk with maturity and integrity through genuine hardship, knowing God is working all things together for good.**

So let's get to some basic terms and unpack this verse:

Rom 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.

Know

- **eidō (i'-do) A primary verb; properly to see (literally or figuratively); by implication (in the perfect only) to know: - be aware, behold, consider...**
 - 644 times in the NT
 - 90% (roughly) translated "see" or "saw"
 - "Seeing is believing" – good way to understand this
 - IOW, Paul begins this passage suggesting this is a concept everyone understands, because we've all seen it.
 - But if you've been paying attention, the passage has – for 2000 years – proven difficult to translate!
 - What this suggests to me – especially knowing that Paul and his companions have suffered MUCH, as well as many Christians at the time of this writing suffering simply because they have been identified with Christ – that today, we're missing something.

Those who

- **Is it individuals or an entire group (family)?**
- Throughout the OT, God was inarguably much more focused on the Nation of Israel than He was on any one individual's quality of life.
 - Now, don't misquote me: I didn't say God wasn't focused on individuals.
 - Indeed, salvation is not collective – it is individually offered and received.
 - But as far as His glory being revealed to the nations of the world, it was always Israel as a Nation that God's glory was seen.
 - Within the nation of Israel, they certainly had their heroes of the faith.

- But when the world watched, God's favor to the Israelite Nation was way more often than not the focal point.
 - So much so that several prophets and kings including Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Samuel, had conversations with God pleading with him not to destroy an adulterous Israel, because the world would mock Him as a weak god.
- The question now: Has anything changed in the New Covenant regarding God's word in both individuals and nations?
 - Answer: Yes, and No.
 - Romans is an excellent work in one specific way: It shows God's great love for His FAMILY – which now is defined by grace through faith as opposed to solely the nation of Israel.
 - As Paul has already mentioned in Romans, and will mention again, Jesus was rejected by a large percentage of the Jews.
 - God saw this coming.
 - So He invited the entire world to experience His grace.
 - And all who receive His grace are then His children – co-heirs with Christ, all in one big family of kings and queens, representing the Father wherever they go.
 - And as the Church represents unconditional love and correctly teaches the True character and attributes of God, God is glorified through the church.
 - But also, God is clearly focused on the individual for salvation, sanctification, justification, righteousness, and glory.
- That said, I believe the answer to the first question about individuals and/or a group is BOTH.
 - With this caveat: PRIMARILY ADDRESSED TO INDIVIDUALS.
 - God indeed works for good on behalf of both individuals and His entire Family.
 - And His character from Creation has always been a love for both His chosen people as a whole, and for individuals within the family.
 - But the context strongly speaks to the individual here in Romans 8, all throughout.
 - The context is PRIMARILY to the individual, but not SOLELY.
 - IOW, God works out His good purposes for the souls who love Him, as well as for His family who loves Him.
 - No matter what things might look like today, God's goodness will always be the result – for both individual saints as well as the entire family of God.
- Now, let me insert something here as it regards translational difficulty...
 - We, as Americans, are REALLY BAD at seeing things as a collective culture.
 - Partly because we have a divided culture – splintered across all kinds of lines.
 - Multicultural and Diverse, but not UNIFIED.
 - Our founding fathers had a vision for being one nation under the protection and power of the God of the Bible, but freedom and individualism coupled with a now godless interpretation of the constitution has eroded our nation into classes, groups, cliques, races, and all manner of social standings.
 - We don't experience a collective love of country anymore.
 - Some say, well, when another 911 happens, we'll come together and be unified.
 - I'm not so sure.

- Please feel free to disagree with this little rabbit trail, but I mention it because I believe a generation is being raised that doesn't understand Unity in Diversity. Doesn't understand a culture similar to that of Israel in the desert, or in the time of the judges, or kings, or captivity, or under Roman rule, such as when this letter was penned to the church.
 - And therefore, we lack a significant, experiential way of correctly understanding this passage.
 - God's good work is carried out for His entire Family, as well as for the many individuals who make it up.

Love God

- **Agape = unconditional love**
- It is the perfect love God gives to us, that He desires and deserves in return from His children.
- What does it look like to Love God?
 - Important to answer, since this is clearly a prerequisite to the point of this passage.
- When we did our "Neighborhood Church" sermon series nearly 3 years ago (and then changed the name from CrossRoads to NC), we spent several weeks on our mission statement: Loving God, one another, and our neighbors.
 - In one of those messages, I made a clear contrast between how we choose to show our love to God, and how God reveals to us what loving Him really involves.
 - I challenged you to consider how you show your love to God, and compare it to how His word defines what loving Him looks like:
 - **Expressive worship** – both private and corporate
 - **Sacrifice** is HUGE in Isaiah and other famous passages where God is fed up with deceitful people being "showy" but lacking integrity.
 - **Ministering to the poor** is a HUGE theme – tied directly as a primary way to show love to God
 - Jesus goes so far in the parable of the sheep and goats to say "as you do unto them, you do unto me."
 - **Reading His Word** – often called His love letter to you – LOVING IT.
 - Do you LOVE God?
 - The answer to that is how often you read and obey His Word.
 - Many people try to convince themselves they can love God in their own, unique way.
 - I caution you, church, don't be that guy.
 - There's no scriptural backing suggesting your way of loving God is better or more received than the few ways I've mentioned above.

All things

- **Pas = all, any, every, "the whole" (1238 times in the NT)**
- "things" is not in the Greek text – it is arguably implied
 - But I believe the passage would be a bit more clear if the English translators didn't put "things" in there.
 - "All works together for good" gives it a more generic, less specific flavor
 - It's not that God doesn't care about the smallest details – He does!
 - It's that man tends to misread God's purposes in the smaller details, thus distorting a truer picture of the WHOLE.
- And "all" applies – in context – primarily to sufferings and hardships.

Work together

- **One Greek word: sunergeō = to be a fellow worker, that is, co-operate: - help (work) with**
 - Adam Clarke notes that the words sunergeo and agape are in the present tense.
 - This is significant in that the passage isn't teaching that once bad things have happened, the later result is the "good"
 - The text is talking about the NOW.
 - Yes, that even WHILE persecutions, famines, afflictions, etc., are happening, they are "working together" for good.
 - **Recipes**, ingredients, one at a time...
 - They all "sunergeo" to form a tasty dish.

Good

- **Agathos = "good" (in any sense, often as noun): - benefit, good (-s, things), well.**
 - Have you figured out yet that God's definition of "good" is often at odds with your definition of "good"?
 - Hold that thought...

Called

- **klētos = invited, that is, appointed, or (specifically) a saint: - called.**
 - "invited" is the best way to understand this word.
 - God has created you, and invited you to serve Him.
 - This is not unique to those who – by grace through faith – believe and are saved.
 - The Bible says ALL are "called/invited" but few accept the call.
 - In Matt 22, the parable of the feast in which the master extends the call to his neighbors, most of whom reject the invitation...
 - Ends with "many are called but few are chosen."
 - Those "chosen" are clearly the ones who accepted the invitation.
 - The master didn't force the invited to attend.
 - He placed a great banquet on the table and invited ALL!
 - And ALL those who answered the call were then "chosen" by the master.

According

- **Kata = 7 or 8 different English words, depending on context**
 - **About, according, in, after, against, down, aside, apart...**
 - Every literal English translation feels "according" is the best for this context, so I'll take their word for it.
 - Therefore, you are "appointed" in accordance with...

Purpose

- The word "His" is NOT in the original Greek – it is implied.
- It's not a big deal that "His" isn't in there – this is, after all, God's world.
- Everything is created with HIS purpose in mind.
- **Prosthesis = a setting forth, that is, (figuratively) proposal (intention)**

- IOW, God says to His children, “This, _____, is why I created you. Walk in that way, and so fulfill the specific purpose for which you walk the earth before I call you home to heaven.”
 - Your purpose is found in your Spiritual gifts, your obedience to the basics, your willingness to be inconvenienced for the needs of others, etc.

OK, with all that, it’s **“Workshop Time”!**

- **Get in groups of 4-5, and paraphrase Romans 8:28.**
 - **One sentence, in your own words, based on the terms we’ve just defined.**

(That was a teaser as to some of what you’ll experience this Friday night!)

To close, I have two **Encouragements** for you, and one piece of homework...

1) See “good” from God’s perspective

- As “children” of God, it’s important to note that a child’s definition of “good” doesn’t always match the parent’s definition of good, right?
- A “good” day for a kid is playing, no responsibilities, fun, candy, a movie, more snacks, and falling asleep on the couch because you never had to actually go to bed.
- For a parent, a “good” day for the kid meant they learned something, showed unconditional love to their sibling, responded maturely to a hard situation, ate healthily on their own without being asked, and brushed their teeth and got in bed without being hassled.
 - Those are very different definitions of GOOD!
- YOU are the kid in that illustration! You know that, right?

2) Learn when to quote this verse

- Hint: It’s wise not to quote it to someone currently involved in a severe hardship.
 - Especially unwise to quote it to those who are fairly new in the faith.
 - Why? Because it takes time to come to grips with God’s definition of “good,” as we grow in faith.
- Now, after walking through hard times, THEN encouraging believers to look back on what transpired and look for God’s hand... that’s very appropriate.
 - What’s promised here is that those who love God, who trust Him completely, will see clearly that even while the hardship was being lived out, His working together of the circumstances for His goodness was evident while we mourned, cried, experienced pain, etc.
- If you can honestly – as you mature and understand life isn’t all about YOU – view hardships like just eating a spoonful of flour knowing God is baking a cake, you’ll do well to walk through it with integrity.

Homework:

Take inventory:

- **Are some of your hardships “First World Problems”?**
 - If so, grow up.
- As for the other hardships...
 - **Your unconditional love for God is required as you endure.**
 - This doesn’t mean you don’t question Him, or cry, or mourn

- It means you remain close to Him, comprehending He hates sin and all the deathly results in brings in all its forms MORE THAN YOU DO.
- As we learned last week, the Spirit GROANS with you. He is enduring the suffering right alongside you, dwelling within you.
- Finally, notice the language (again) Paul uses:
 - Because of the word “Know” (translated “see”) being used here, my paraphrase would be this:
 - It should be obvious to all believers, based on God’s loving character, that through all the suffering, hardships, loss of loved ones, and pain the saints endure, God works them all together for His perfect “good”.
 - So my final question: **Is this truth (all things working together for good) obvious to YOU?**
 - The answer to that question will determine the integrity with which you walk through the various trials in your life.

PRAY

Promote NU

Tim and Stuart available for prayer!