

Romans 8

Every Adversity Is The Seed of A Greater Benefit

We begin today continuing our study in Romans 8, and we pick up at verse 26:

26 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

Isn't that a most comforting verse? When you're a Christian, when you believe that Jesus Christ went to the cross for your sins, it is so wonderful to know that God is on your side. I think some Christians go through their lives flinching, waiting to be blasted by God for every small thing they do wrong. There is a sense in which God rebukes and chastens His own, but keep in mind, however, that our fallenness and our humanness is as much a concern of the Spirit of God as it is our concern. When we groan and say, "*God this is a terrible way to live. I long that my inner self should be set free and that I should climb to the full capacity of who you wanted me to be. I want to get rid of this flesh, this humanness that binds and trips me up,*" God hears and helps us.

We believe God only moves in to discipline us when we get happy with our sin and keep doing it. As long as we long to be delivered, the Spirit of God is eagerly desiring right along with us. What security that is. The Spirit of God is constantly providing for us and we could not maintain our Christian walk without Him.

The problem is that we do not really know what to pray for. We are going through suffering. We have struggles with sin and the weakness of our flesh. We do not know the future. We do not know exactly what to pray for. That does not mean that we don't know how to get down on our hands and knees or fold our hands. This verse is talking about content, not form. In previous messages, we have looked at the truth that once a person is saved they are saved forever. But how is that so? Have we ever thought about how this actually works out? How does God keep us saved, especially when we still sometimes blow it in our daily lives? Let's find out what the Scripture tells us about that. Our redemption, our salvation, must be maintained and you and I don't know how to do that, do we? This verse gives us some important information about how that process works.

The Spirit helps our weakness, our fallenness, our sinful state. Believers could not keep themselves saved because they do not even know what to pray for. This is essential to understand. The reason believers can be sure that once a person is saved they are saved forever is because of the continual work, the daily ongoing work, of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So believers should be offering praise to Jesus for keeping us saved by continually interceding for us before the throne of God. We like the way Hebrews 7:25 emphasizes this:

25 Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to

God through him. He lives forever to plead with God on their behalf.

What more could we ask for? What keeps believers saved is the ever-living Christ defending them before the throne of God in Heaven. Not only do they have Christ in Heaven interceding for them, but they also have the Holy Spirit in them helping them. We really don't know how to pray and protect ourselves. We must have help, and so we have it from Jesus in Heaven and the Holy Spirit of God on earth. It is obvious we do not know what to pray for. The apostle Paul learned what we should all know (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). We really do not know what to pray for. When we suffer we ask God to take away the suffering immediately, if not sooner. We say, "*I've learned my lesson Lord, now please take this away.*" But we do not know whether a worse fate was about to befall us if it were not for the suffering God puts us through. Humanly we do not know how to tap divine resources. We do not know how to pray for the things we ought to pray for. But the Holy Spirit takes the longings of the believer's heart for God and translates them into the language that makes the desires of his/her heart perfectly understandable to God. The Holy Spirit of God is working in us to bring about the perfect will of God. Now we continue in Romans 8:27:

*27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for **the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.***

You may not know the will of God but the Holy Spirit does. That should be very comforting to those of us who are believers. You may not know how to pray but the Holy Spirit does. When the Bible says to pray in the Spirit, that does not mean to flip out. It means to pray according to the will of God. God always knows what the Spirit is praying because the Spirit is always praying in accord with the will of God. Why? Because within the Trinity there is always perfect harmony.

And now we come to another of what must be one of the top ten verses of the Bible, Romans 8:28:

*28 And we know that God causes **everything to work together for the good** of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.*

And just what is God's purpose? His purpose is to bring us to faith, salvation, and eternal life through believing and trusting in the work of His Son, Jesus. Everything works toward that, and everything works toward that because of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit of God. The only reason all things work together for good is because God is ultimately leading those who are His born again children to what is good. The Holy Spirit is helping us on that journey by His marvelous intercessory work within our hearts. This verse has to be the most glorious promise imaginable for those of us who run into trials and tribulations almost every day of our lives. We will see four elements in this promise of security in verse 28:

- ❖ The extent of it
- ❖ The recipients of it

- ❖ The source of it
- ❖ The certainty of it

Let's begin by looking at the extent of our security. Romans 8:28 tells us that **Everything** works together for good. There could never be a more reassuring statement to a believer. There is nothing that could bring more hope, more joy, more trust, more confidence, more happiness, and more freedom to a Christian than to know that no matter what the pain, what the problem, what the trial, what the anxiety, it all works together for good. The extent of this promise is really beyond our ability to fully understand. There is no limit placed on the phrase, "*All things*." Let us jump ahead a few verses and read what verse 32 tells us (ESV):

*32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us **all things**?*

Whatever the difficulty, whatever the pain, the problem, whatever the trouble, whatever **anything**, it will all work together for good **if you know Jesus as your Savior**. God will take all the good things and all the bad things that occur in the lives of believers and use them for the good of the believer. This just has to thrill you to death. This means that it does not matter what has happened or what will happen in the lives of believers. God will make it all work together for their good. What a glorious gift. The "*good*" referred to here refers to the good in the here and now as well as the good ultimately in Heaven. What that means is that no matter what happens in the life of a believer, God will make it work to produce something that will benefit the believer. Look at what God did for His people way back in the Old Testament when they were wandering in the desert before entering the promised land of Israel. Moses writes in Deuteronomy 8:15,16:

*15 who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock,
16 who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, **to do you good** in the end.*

God dragged the Israelites through forty years of destruction, deprivation, difficulty, and wandering aimlessly through the desert to do what for them in the end? Good! Everything ultimately comes together for the good of those who are God's children. In Jeremiah 24:4-7, Jeremiah writes about God allowing the Israelites to be taken into exile in Babylon:

*4 Then the Lord gave me this message:
5 "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The good figs represent the exiles I sent from Judah to the land of the Babylonians.
6 I have sent them into captivity for their own **good**. I will see that they are well treated, and I will bring them back here again. **I will build them up and not tear them down**. I will plant them and not uproot them.
7 I will give them hearts that will recognize me as the Lord. They will be*

my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly.

Here again we see a “**tough love**” approach on the part of God in caring for His children. God allowed them to be taken away to captivity in Babylon. Everything, even those things that appear to be hopeless disasters, will turn out to be for the good of God’s people. Our afflictions will be temporary and the reward that follows faithfully going through them will result in good.

If everything works together for the good of the believer, then **nothing** can work out to be bad. Nothing can really ultimately hurt the believer. There can never be any condemnation from God or the loss of one’s salvation once they have it (Roman 8:1). God’s power supports us in our troubles. We find this all through the Bible. For example in 2 Corinthians 12:9,10, Paul writes:

*9 but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for **power is made perfect in weakness.**” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the **power of Christ** may dwell in me.*

*10 Since I know it is all for Christ’s **good**, I am quite content with my weaknesses and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

When trouble comes we can look to Psalm 91:14,15:

*14 The Lord says, “**I will rescue those who love me.** I will protect those who trust in my name.*

15 When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue them and honor them.

When we’re in need and seem to be on the brink of disaster, we can remember Philippians 4:19:

*19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply **all your needs** from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.*

As you can see by the verses we’ve been reading, **the Bible** also works together for the good of believers. We find that confirmed in Acts 20:32:

32 “And now I entrust you to God and the word of his grace—his message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

Prayer also works together for the good of the believer. As we pray, God’s power is released in our lives. Then there are also angels according to Hebrews 1:13,14:

13 And God never said to an angel, as he did to his Son, “Sit in honor at

my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet.”

*14 But angels are only servants. They are spirits sent from God **to care for** those who will receive salvation.*

Then there are **other Christians** who also work for the good of the believer as Paul writes to the people in Corinth, 2 Corinthians 1:24:

*24 But that does not mean we want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice. **We want to work together** with you so you will be full of joy as you stand firm in your faith.*

So we see that there are good things that work for the good of the believer, but we don't think that's the main thrust of this verse in Romans 8:28. What so many of us lose sight of is that bad things also work together for our good. We need to understand here right from the get-go that this verse **does not say** that bad things are good. We should know that bad things are bad. That's why they're called "*bad*." So bad things are not good but they're used by God to work for the good of all believers. You know what that tells us? It tells us that God is so absolutely and totally in control of everything that He can overrule the worst of events and use them to work for our good. That's what it means to be in the family of God. Believers can have this amazing confidence that no matter what comes into your life, be it good or evil, God will use it for your good.

I think we could all agree that in and of itself **suffering** is a bad thing. Suffering is the result of the existence of evil in this world. But the believer can know that God is in the suffering with them working out something that will result in good. Sometimes a believer suffers because God is disciplining them for their sin. Other times we're just suffering so that God can refine us for one reason or another. God is testing us, pruning us, building our strength. He is purifying us so that we'll come out like pure gold, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter: 1:6,7:

6 So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.

7 These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

On still other occasions suffering occurs so that God can be glorified. We see that in John 9:1-3:

1 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.

2 “Teacher,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it a result of his own sins or those of his parents?”

3 “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered.

“He was born blind so the power of God could be seen in him.

But through it all God brings about a good result as we see in the following verses. James 1:12:

*12 God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised **to those who love him.***

1 Peter 5:10:

10 In his kindness God called you to his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. After you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

You see this is part of the perfecting process. It is through suffering that we learn kindness, sympathy, compassion, patience, and gentleness. **We learn to look to God and trust Him through faith.** We depend on His power. We need His grace. We rejoice in His mercy. Those are all the things we can learn through suffering. So suffering can be used for the good of the believer.

A classic example of this is Joseph in Genesis chapter 37. Joseph’s brothers threw him in an abandoned well. They sold him into slavery, and then he was thrown into prison for a crime he never committed. But the end of the story for Joseph was that it all worked out for good. If Joseph had never been sent to Egypt and thrown into prison, he would never have become prime minister and been placed in a position where he could help Egypt and his own family through a terrible period of famine.

Suffering can draw us to God and that is **good**. Suffering can purge out sin in our lives and that is **good**. Suffering can teach us what other people are going through in order that we can be compassionate and that is **good** as well. Job lost everything, and I mean everything, through an unbelievable series of circumstances. The only thing that he didn’t lose was his wife, and as things progressed he probably wasn’t very encouraged by some of the horrible advice she gave him. Job got ulcers; boils all over his body; his cattle were stolen; and all his children were killed. And it all came down to this statement in Job 42:1-6:

1 Then Job replied to the Lord:

2 “I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you.

3 You ask, ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?’ It is I. And I was talking about things I did not understand, things far too wonderful for me.

4 “You said, ‘Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.’

5 “I had heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.

6 I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my

repentance.”

Job says that finally for the first time he sees the true nature of God and he was only able to do so after he lost everything. The very same thing happened to me. But after Job faithfully went through it all, God gave him back much more than he had ever lost. God has also done the same for me although I would not equate my faithfulness to Job's. I still have a long way to go and I've no doubt that if my faith and trust in God continues to grow, He will provide added blessings.

Suffering can work for good because it drives us to God. Even in the lives of people who don't believe in God, when disaster strikes, they cry out to Him for help. When a person has all the good things in this life, it's easy for them not to feel a need for God. When a person is suffering, however, they often realize that only God can help them. Personally after years of insolent arrogance and having whatever I wanted, I was brought to my knees through the suffering I experienced. I went from having all I wanted to wondering how I was going to pay the rent. Had God not permitted that to happen to me, I may have continued on through life thinking I could control my own life and never have felt the need to seek out the message of salvation. As a result I would have faced spending my eternity in Hell.

Am I grateful for suffering? Not at the moment it's happening, but looking back, I am so grateful that God allowed me to go through what I needed to go through so that I would recognize how much I need Him and how much I need His Son, Jesus, as my Savior. When life is going along just great we tend to become preoccupied with our job, house, car, business, wardrobe, and any number of activities that can satisfy our lusts for pleasure. Then someone very close to you becomes terminally ill and suddenly your whole value system changes and your heart is driven to seek God in order to deal with that pain. Imagine the suffering that Christ endured for us, culminating in a tortuous death.

Suffering also works together for **good** because **it confirms to us that we are God's children**. I just love this passage in Hebrews 12:6-8:

6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.”

7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined?

8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all.

When you see yourself going through suffering and you know the Lord is chastening you and refining you, you ought to be thankful that He cares enough about you to want to make you the child you ought to be. God exercises discipline in order to refine you. But keep in mind that **this doesn't apply to everybody**. This only applies to those who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Struggling with temptation can be a **good** thing as well because it can force us to our

knees to pray. And praying when we are tempted is a **very good** thing. As a matter of fact, if we could train ourselves to pray every time adversity or temptation came upon us, we'd probably save ourselves a great deal of frustration and depression. Struggling can also teach us lessons that later can be used to help others, and that too is a **good** thing. In that regard we really like what the author of Hebrews writes about Jesus in Hebrews 2:18:

18 Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted.

Struggling with temptation can also lead to **good** because it causes us to lean on the strength of God.

Another bad thing that can work for **good**, believe it or not, is sin. You well might be wondering how that's possible. God literally uses our sin for **good** when we seek forgiveness for it. When we see the sinful behavior of others, we may sense in our own heart a sense that such behavior is not acceptable. It can also cause us to be stronger in our opposition to such behavior and even motivate us to try and do something about it. We may also become more thankful that God has delivered us from similar behavior.

Now let's get to the main point of all of this. Our own sins, if we're believers, work ultimately for our own **good**. God takes our sins and eliminates the judgment that would result from them if we did not believe. The difference between a believer and a nonbeliever is that God sees the believer as sinless because of their faith in the work of Christ. Now the immediate consequences and chastening resulting from our sin will not be eliminated, but the ultimate consequence of judgment and damnation is eliminated. When a believer sees sin in their lives, we seek God out to deliver us from that sin. That is definitely **good**. Sin in the life of a believer will drive that believer to God.

Furthermore, the sins in our lives that God forgives and erases from our record often become wonderful lessons that teach us humility and take away false pride and self-righteousness. So our sins make us look to God. Sin in our lives also makes us hate sin. We hate what we see, and that's **good**. We hate what we see and that turns our hearts toward God. Our sin teaches us to see our weaknesses, to desire God and Christ in our lives, to pray, to be humble, to help others, to love God's grace, and to long for Heaven. God eliminates the ultimate penalty for our sins because Christ already took the penalty for us.

God, therefore, can use our sins as a means of teaching us how to live a better life.

Now let's focus a bit more on those who receive this security that we're told about in Romans 8:28. We're told that all things work together for good, but not for everybody. Not everybody in the world can claim that promise or hang onto that secure hope. There is an important qualifier in verse 28 and it reads, *"To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* *"Those who love God"* is simply an identification

of believers, those who know God through faith in Jesus Christ. True believers love God. From God's side it is "*Those who are called.*" So from the side of believers, they are the ones that love God, and from God's side, He is the one who has called the believer.

There is nothing more important in the life of a Christian than loving God.

This theme carries all the way through the Bible from beginning to end. Let's, for example look at Deuteronomy 7:9:

*9 Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and constantly loves those **who love him** and obey his commands.*

God's redeemed people have always been those **who love Him**. We see it again in the New Testament, for example, in 1Corinthians 2:9:

*9 That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those **who love him.**"*

Also in James 1:12:

*12 God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those **who love him.***

Why does Paul use the phrase in Romans 8:28, "*to those who love God?*" Why doesn't he say, "*to those who are believers,*" or something similar. We believe the reason is that Paul is affirming a basic element of salvation. That is that **true saving faith** goes beyond just believing. True saving faith must be **evidenced** by a **love for God.**, and that's going to be demonstrated in the way we live our lives, not by what we say we are. We'll close the message this morning with that thought by looking at James 2:14-20:

14 Dear brothers and sisters, what's the use of saying you have faith if you don't prove it by your actions? That kind of faith can't save anyone.

*15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing,
16 and you say, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?*

17 So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. Faith that doesn't show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.

*18 Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "**I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds.**"*

*19 Do you still think it's enough just to believe that there is one God?
Well, even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror!
20 Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good
deeds is useless?*

True salvation produces lovers of God.

Take this Word of God with you as you leave here today and do likewise in accordance with the leading of the Holy Spirit within you. And if you don't have the gift of the Holy Spirit within you, which comes only with faith in Christ and His death on the cross for your sins, just remember, all you have to do is let God know you want Him to reveal His truth to you, and God's promise is that He will begin leading you to such faith. As always Betty and I are available to assist you in further understanding that procedure and in helping you take those steps if you would only ask.

Next week, more wonders in the concluding verses of Romans chapter eight.