



# Week 5: A New Perspective on Problems

March 6-12, 2022

Romans 8:26-30 | Chapters 10-12

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So far in our walk through Romans 8, we've touched on how God has redeemed us, given us life through His Spirit, brought us into His family, and given us hope for a future in the middle of a fallen world. This week, we're going to focus on one of the most well-known verses in Romans and see how God takes our pain and uses it for His purpose.

**As you read the following verses, underline every promise of God you find. Take notice of how these promises connect to God's purpose for our lives.**

## **ROMANS 8:26-30**

*And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 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. 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. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.*

**List the promises you underlined below.**

**Take a closer look at Romans 8:28. What does "all things" mean within the context of that verse?**

“All things” in this passage can mean several things. One is all of the sin we face. All of our poor decisions. Another is all the unfortunate things that happen to us. Sometimes we experience pain that comes from living in a sinful world. We didn’t do anything to invite the suffering; it just happened. Also included in “all things” are the pleasant and helpful things that happen to us. Paul was saying that God takes all the pieces of our lives and arranges them for our ultimate good. However, “good” here does not mean earthly good. To understand what Paul meant, we need to consider WHO this passage is for.

**Who is being promised something in verse 28? Why does this distinction matter?**

In this passage, God is making a promise. If there is a promise to be claimed, we must know who the promise is for. Paul said that it’s *for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose*. This limits the application of God’s promise to Christians. That changes what Paul meant by “good.” In the context of these verses, it doesn’t mean we will get a good doctor’s report this week. It doesn’t mean we will get that thing we’ve been hoping and praying for. Scripture determines how we define the word *good*. In the original language of the New Testament, the word *good* can also mean useful. And for the believer, God defines what is good and what is useful for us. Moving further into the passage, Paul further explained the good God is promising.

**First, God will conform us into the image of His Son (v.29). Why do we need to be conformed into the image of Christ?**

**How did God use Jesus’ suffering to bring about our good? How does this help you understand how God can use every part of your experience for good?**

We can trust God for our good because He’s had a plan from before time began. God foreknew (or planned ahead of time) to make us like Jesus. To be conformed into the image of Christ means to become increasingly like the One who broke the power of sin and death. Because Jesus is unstained by sin, He doesn’t experience any of the brokenness we experience. At every moment He experiences perfect fellowship with the Father. In His grace, God takes the broken pieces of our lives and uses them to make us look more like Jesus.

**What does verse 29 give as the bottom line (goal) of God's work in us?**

**What does "conformed to the image of His Son" mean?**

The good comes by God's working in our lives. He is the only One who can turn tragedy into triumph. Those who love God are the ones called to salvation according to His purpose. That purpose is stated in verse 29 and defines the good of verse 28, namely, that we be conformed to the image of His Son. God's good purpose is to use everything that comes into our lives to make us more and more like Jesus. Rather than ask Him why particular things happen to us, we should be asking in faith how He wants to use those things to fulfill His purpose for us.

**From verses 29-30, what steps are outlined "for those God foreknew"?**

**How do these verses give us reason to thank God even if we don't fully understand Him?**

Paul described how God carried out His saving purpose with five verbs - foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. God, knowing the end from the beginning and all that is in between, predestined (determined beforehand) to save people; called them through the work of the Holy Spirit; justified them by faith; and glorified them. Being glorified is the final stage in the process of salvation when believers receive their resurrection bodies at Christ's return. Paul was so confident that God would complete His plan for believers that he referred to glorification as though it already had occurred.

## **APPLICATION**

**God is working all things together for our good. What does this truth-and the rest of Romans 8:26-30-tell you about God? What does it tell you about His desires for you?**

**God is busy conforming you into the image of Christ. What is your responsibility in this process, and what needs to be your response to Him this week?**

## **PRAYER**

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His work on the cross that promises an ultimate end to suffering. Thank Him for walking with you through your pain, and ask Him to help you see how He is using it for good.

## COMMENTARY

### ROMANS 8:26-30

**8:26-27.** Hope sustains and helps the believer through the present times of suffering. In the same way, the Spirit helps and sustains the believer in weakness, specifically through the ministry of prayer. The advocacy role of the Spirit was promised by Jesus, and this is part of the fulfillment of those promises (see [John 14:16,26](#); [15:26](#); [16:7](#)). Paul's description of the Spirit's role in prayer is one of the most intimate glimpses we have in all of Scripture of the inner workings of the Godhead. When we are weak and trembling, confused about the purposes of God in our sufferings or our confusion, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

In language we cannot understand, the Father searches the human heart, the home of the Spirit, to hear the Spirit's prayer. When the Father hears His will being prayed by the Spirit (because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will), then the Father and Spirit are in perfect harmony for the purposes of God to be accomplished in the believer through the instrument of prayer.

**8:28.** The purposes of God are the most important reality in the spiritual life. The purpose of God's will is what controls everything (see [Ephesians 1:11](#)) in light of eternity ([Ephesians 3:11](#)). God called us to a holy life on the basis of His purpose and grace, and it is that purpose to which we have been called that verse 28 invites our submission.

Our new life in the Spirit is based on God's good purposes for our lives, and that includes suffering. The suffering (v. 17) and groaning (v. 23) that Paul has been discussing is what is in view in verse 28. When we find ourselves in trying circumstances in life, we can know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Read literally, it is easy to see why some consider this the greatest verse in Scripture. It tells us that nothing happens outside of God's plan for our good.

An important grammatical question clarifies the role of God in accomplishing His purposes. All things can be taken either as the subject (as in KJV; "all things work together"), or as the object (NIV [adverbial], "in all things God works"; NASB [direct object], "God causes all things to work"). As the subject, "all things" are in control, and while they end happily, they do so seemingly in and of themselves. When God is the subject, He causes all things to work together for good. In other words, there is no doubting the outcome's ultimate good. Lest we translate according to our theological preferences, it must be noted that (a) there is not a compelling grammatical reason to translate one way or the other, and (b) the meaning is not radically altered with either translation. God and His purpose are the controlling elements of the verse. Paul is clearly subordinating all things to the purpose of God, regardless of how the verse is written.

**8:29-30.** These two verses explain what God's purpose is in His calling to salvation, and how it is accomplished. First, the purpose: that there might be many who would be conformed to the likeness of His Son. God was not satisfied to have a family with an "only child." Indeed, the entire human family, all the descendants of Adam and Eve, were to have been His family, walking in fellowship with Him for eternity. But since the rebellion of man, it has been His purpose to redeem a family for Himself out of the fallen race.

Second, His method: from our perspective, God adopted us as spiritual orphans into His family, so that His Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. That is the metaphor for what God did behind the scenes to accomplish His purpose. How did God save those whom

He adopted into his family? Five of the key actions are listed in these verses, and they are highlighted in the list below:

1. Foreknowledge: God's setting His love upon (choosing) those who would be conformed to His Son's image ([Amos 3:2](#); [1 Corinthians 8:3](#); [Galatians 4:9](#)).
2. Predestination: God's determining the destiny of those upon whom He has set His love.
3. Calling: God's effectual call from death to life those upon whom He has set His love (cf. the calling forth of Lazarus in John 11).
4. Regeneration: God's quickening, making alive, the spirit of those who are called so that they can believe.
5. Faith: God's gift of faith ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) exercised by the regenerate.
6. Repentance: The turning from sin of those who have believed (this step is often combined with faith into a step of faith-repentance, or repentance and faith).
7. Justification: God's declaring as righteous those who have repented and believed.
8. Adoption: God's inclusion of the justified in the family of God.
9. Sanctification: God's work through the Holy Spirit to conform those in the family of God into the image of His Son.
10. Perseverance: God's insuring that those who are effectively called complete their pilgrimage of faith.
11. Glorification: God's fulfillment of His purposes—the making of fallen sinners into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ, for eternity.

While these passages have generated much heated discussion over the years (primarily concerning the meaning of foreknew and predestined), there is one key element which, if overlooked, gives rise to confusion, but if observed, gives focus to the passage. That key element is God Himself: God has a "purpose" (v. 28), God foreknew, God predestined, God called, God justified, and God glorified (though future, glorification is written here in a "prophetic past tense"). This passage is all about God, not man! God is the adopter, humans are the adoptees. God is designing, engineering, and accomplishing His purpose in the earth, quite apart from the interference and influence of men and women. In light of this overarching oversight of the Father God over His family, how should that make the believer feel? Or, to use Paul's words, "What, then, shall we say in response to this?" ([Romans 8:31](#)).