

God's Plan, God's Way 6-24-01

Romans 8:28-39

This is the third message on Romans chapter 8. We began with (Victorious Living) the cry of Paul's heart in chapter 7 – asking who would deliver him from the body of death that kept walking in disobedience to God and to his own intentions. He thanks God that Jesus came to do just that by becoming like us and dying as a sin offering. By His Spirit we can put to death our evil nature with Jesus on the cross. By that same Spirit we can let his resurrected life be manifest in us.

In the second part (Heirs of God) we saw God's design for redeeming this world, including our bodies and clothing us in His glory. We also saw how suffering is an instrument to bring us to that wonder and that all the godly in Christ will suffer. Yet, that suffering is nothing compared to the glory we will receive. So not only does Jesus work change in the way we live out our lives on a daily basis, and set us free from that inability to change, but the end result of the transformation He is making in us is sharing His glory and inheriting everything. At this very moment the Spirit is praying for each of us - toward that goal - in groans that are the very heart of God for us.

This is where we pick up in verse 28. Verse 28 was once voted by Christians to be their favorite verse. Let's see where it fits in with the chapter. The Apostle Paul is talking about going back to the Garden like state where everything is as it should be. The Spirit is praying God's will in your life. AND... Romans 8:28 (NIV)²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

It is easy to see why this is a favorite verse for in that little three letter word found so often in Scripture – 'ALL' - we find purpose in everything we experience. God is good! And if you love Him, He sees that everything that comes your way is bringing you to that place where you will share his glory. Last week I heard an author say that applies to the mate God chose for you. That fits in with the word ALL doesn't it? Because God has in mind your need and sees the areas in your life in which you are not surrendered to Him. He will bring a mate whose very personality and habits will bring out your need. Why? Because He is good and loves you and wants you to recognize your need to change.

Often tragedy makes it tough to see the reality of this verse. After Moses first confrontation with Pharaoh, Pharaoh doubled the quota of bricks and made the people find their own straw. Do you think Moses could see God working for his good when the elders of Israel blamed him and told him to go away and leave them alone? But that was just the beginning of a great deliverance. Or what about Joseph when he was sold as a slave by his own brothers, or put into prison for being virtuous, or forgotten by the prisoner he helped? But through that suffering the world was saved from starvation. Most difficult of all do you think the disciples would of thought God works all things together for good when they saw their Lord and friend hanging on a Roman cross, dying in agony? Yet through that, the greatest deliverance of all time was worked out for you and me.

Hebrews 11 tells us that all the heroes of faith who died not receiving the promise obtained a better resurrection. All those sufferings do work together for good. Sometimes we see it in this life as in the above examples, but many times we will not see the good of it until we go to our reward.

Remember who wrote the verse we are contemplating, a man who had been beaten and left for dead, shipwrecked, snake bit, abandoned, persecuted by his own nation. He said – Yes! God uses all that for good. It may look ugly but God turns it around and uses it for good in my life and the lives of others who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. This is God's plan for you: to be conformed to the likeness of his Son! Your destiny is to be molded into a shape like that of the Son. It is akin to sharing his glory – as glory is the radiance of his attributes. If you shine with love, faithfulness, holiness, gentleness, goodness, joy, and patience then you are conformed to the likeness of the Son. That is your destiny! It is His goal for you. And the work He started He is able to complete. If that doesn't thrill you to the bone, you missed what is being said! Like Jesus! You! Think about that! And so Jesus will be the firstborn among many brothers. All are heirs, and yet the firstborn has special rights and a place of superiority over the others.

That thrills my heart because I know the ugly failures in my life will be a thing of the past. I will never again give in to my flesh. That means I will never face the consequences of sin again. My thoughts will not be a battleground for my mind but instead, will be entirely conformed to his. Oh happy day! You see what Jesus made possible in the first part of this chapter – walking in the Spirit – manifesting the life of Christ in my mortal body – will be something I will one day do consistently from that day onward. God sees me that way now, but I want to see it a reality in my experience. That is the hope that Paul says we do not yet possess but wait for patiently.

There is a doctrinal issue in this verse about foreknowledge and predestination. Calvinists point at the predestination and say God picks some for no particular reason and brings them to salvation and glory. Armenians say he chose because He foreknew those who would respond to the conviction of the Spirit, and receive the grace offered to them by faith. Whatever the case, don't miss the plan of God in conforming you to the image his Son. Again this is a return to the original condition in which God made man. Remember they (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) said, "Let us make man in our image". We will be in the image of Jesus but with a greater understanding of love and grace and mercy than Adam could have ever known.

³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. He did it all! He chose you, called you, justified you and glorifies you. What a Father!

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? If you can grasp what God has done, what He has promised and is doing right now, what do you say? How can you respond? We ought to be overflowing with gratitude. I know

we get too complacent about all the goodness in our lives but we have to shake that off and take a look at all He has done and is doing right now! Reality is that if the Almighty has done all this for us can anyone change that? No way! Can someone come against you and stop what God is doing in you, his plan for you to be like his Son? Who can stop omnipotent God? No one! No thing! No way! No how! God is for you. Realize it! Find comfort in it; interpret life's circumstances with that in mind.

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

If you are not quite sure about the commitment of God to you think about the commitment He has already made. He delivered up his only Son for you! Do think there is anyway you will not inherit everything? The One that has delighted the heart of God through eternity was not even spared in the Father displaying his love for you. "along with him" He has given Jesus to you as your Savior. That is the main thing. "Graciously give us all things" - everything else in the restored creation is just a little bonus. I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine. Since He is the Creator, all his creation is ours too. Remember the song, "Jesus is mine! Everywhere I go; everywhere I be, Jesus is mine!"

This chapter is so full of promises that are above and beyond. Peter uses the word 'inexpressible'. These attempts at expressing God's plan for us take us beyond the limits of our imaginations and stretch our ability to comprehend. We need this vision to endure for the joy that is set before us, so persist in trying grasp it more fully.

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

God has justified you to Himself. He is the righteous One. He is the Standard. If He says the blood of Jesus is enough to make you right with Him, can anyone in heaven or earth bring a charge against you? Satan accuses you and tries to bring you under that condemnation we talked of in the first verse but realize God has justified you and no one can add or detract from that. Quit feeling sorry for yourself when you stumble. Let your Daddy pick you up and walk in the Spirit. You are right with God.

³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

All judgement has been place into the hands of the Son. Do you think He will condemn you when He died for you, was raised to give you new life, is standing before God with the marks that paid for your redemption, and is interceding before God on your behalf?

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

He loves you and nothing can separate you from his love. Can trouble in your life cut off Jesus' love? How about difficulty, can it come between you and his love? Well, what if you were persecuted? Starved? Without shelter and proper clothing? In danger of losing your life? Murdered? Can any of those situations separate you from the Love of Jesus?

³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

The life of a Child of God is not a bed of roses. This chapter talks of sharing his suffering. Paul is reminding us of Psalm 44:22. The world is not worthy of us – of Jesus in us and so it will reject us, even kill us. That's ok! We're just passin' through.

Now the question is can anything come between us and Jesus' love? And the answer is verse 37. ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

The answer is an emphatic NO! In trouble, in hardships, in persecution, in famine, without proper clothing, threatened with death, a sword at our throats, we are more than a conqueror. We don't just have the victory, we have eternal victory. I think of Star Wars when Obi Wan Kenobi tells Darth Vader, "Cut me down and I shall be more powerful than you can ever imagine!" Go ahead – send me home to glory. What the world thinks as victory is their sentence of eternal judgement. When they think they defeated us they just sent us to eternal glory. But I'll be back to rule and reign with the King of kings and Lord of lords. Through Jesus we can face all those circumstances of life and be more than a conqueror.

No food? Turn it into a fast and tune your ear to the Savior. Hardships of body or work, let it be his instrument to teach you to rely on his strength. Persecuted – you are blessed and are laying up treasures in heaven. In danger, you check and double check that you are ready to go Home to your reward, and meet him face to face. We don't just have the final victory, we have the spoils of war, and above all else we have Jesus!

Want an illustration of more than a conqueror? The world took Jesus and to shut him up they brutally murdered him. Victory is resurrection. More than a conqueror is when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and was given a name above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Death can't separate you from his love; life can't, angels can't, demons can't, the present can't, the future can't, no power can. You can't get high enough to escape it or low enough to get under it. The Creator didn't make anything that would separate you from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Master! That love will see you through anything you face (since He is Sovereign over all you face) and draw you into a deeper realization of his love, prepare you to shine with his glory, and inherit ALL. That is your destiny. That is God's plan. This is God's way. Let the fact that He loves you so much fill your heart. Let the truth of what He has in store for you fill your mind so you have a vision to go on through tough circumstances. Let it give you a hope that gets brighter and brighter no matter what He allows to come your way.

That's a brief overview of Romans 8 – now maybe you can see why it is such a great one to memorize and such an encouragement to so many.