

Preached on 4/2/23 at GBC - Ruston

"The PURPOSE Of God, Pt.1"

Romans 8:28-30

When religious people read verses like these or hear a title like the one I've given to this sermon, they immediately think: "This isn't something that is really important. These things can't be understood by men, because we are **JUST HUMANS**." I would have you to keep in mind that **THIS EPISTLE**, and these words weren't written and sent to students in a **THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**, those working on their master's or doctorate degree, but to a local assembly of **JUSTIFIED SAINTS** in order to encourage and strengthen them in "*this most holy faith*." Listen to God's Word: "*All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] **PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE**, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"(II Tim.3:16,17) The word translated "profitable" means 'profit, advantage, or benefit'. Notice the **FIRST THING** the Apostle declares "*all scripture*" is of 'profit, advantage or benefit' – "**DOCTRINE**", which in the original means 'teaching, instruction, precepts'. People today almost seem afraid of doctrine, being more interested in feelings and emotionalism. **LISTEN UP:** Our Lord, His apostles, and all His redeemed sons and daughters in every generation are sent to declare "*the doctrine of Christ*". The Apostle John made this extremely clear – "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*"(II Jn.9) **One more thing before we begin looking at our text for today:** The reason I have no fear in preaching out these doctrinal truths is because it **DOES NOT DEPEND UPON MY ABILITY AS A TEACHER**, but the Holy Spirit to guide and instruct all those Christ saved by His obedience unto death – "*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*"(Jn.6:45); "*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear [them] not, because ye are not of God.*"(Jn.8:47); "*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*"(Matt.13:10-13); "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know [them], because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*"(I Cor.2:14-16) That being said, let's look at vs.28 from our text – "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.*" Like Jn.3:16, this verse is one of the most quoted, misunderstood, and misapplied Scriptures in the word of God. Every religious person, and even those who aren't religious try to claim this promise, framing everything this way – "**WELL, EVERYTHING WORKS TOGETHER FOR GOOD!**" Here's the problem with them trying to apply the doctrinal truth set forth in this Scripture to **ALL MEN**: The verse says that "*all things work together for good to them THAT LOVE GOD, to them who are the called according to [his]purpose.*" This verse states plainly that "**ALL THINGS work together for good**" **ONLY** for those "*that LOVE GOD*", and it also states plainly that "*all things work together for good*" to **THOSE ONLY** are declares as "*them who are the called according to [his]purpose.*" The context of Romans 8 makes it clear that the Apostle is talking particularly about **SALVATION**,

ETERNAL LIFE. He began this chapter with these verses: “[There is] *therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*”(Rom.8:1,2) He ends this chapter with these verses: “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”(Rom.8:38,39) Everything between these two passages is dealing with **HOW** God saves and preserves His people in this “*present, evil world.*” Nothing that happens is left to blind fate or entrusted to the so-called free will of man. All of it is determined by the “*purpose*” of God. Now I’m not a big advocate of “confessions of faith”, but I know that in one aspect these confessions of faith get it right – “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass.” Everything that happens (**and I MEAN EVERYTHING**) in this that we call “**TIME**”, all of it was and is created for one express purpose – To glorify God in every attribute of His holy character as both “*a just God and a Savior.*” **But there’s something else we have to keep in mind:** In spite of the glory of God’s sovereign grace and mercy to **UNGODLY SINNERS in time**, when all of this is done, and time is no more, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be unchanged by any or all of it – “*For I [am] the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*”(Mal.3:6); “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*”(Heb.13:8) Listen to Christ’s prayer to the Father – “*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*”(Jn.17:3-5) The elect of God are the beneficiaries of this glorious mercy and grace, and we will indeed sing the praises of God throughout all eternity, **BUT GOD WILL BE FOREVER WHAT HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN**, the great “**I AM.**”

I want us to quickly consider every aspect of this verse. **First of all**, Paul told them and **US** – “**And WE KNOW.**” That word translated “*we know*” means ‘to perceive with the eyes or any of the senses, **or to understand**’. This understanding brings with it a **CONFIDENCE**. John used the same word – “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*”(I Jn.5:20) So whatever “**WE KNOW**”, it isn’t just speculation or wishful thinking, but a confident expectation that “*what God has promised, He is able also to perform.*” What do “**WE KNOW**”, **i.e., what do we have confidence in?** “**That ALL THINGS work together for good.**” This “*all things*” includes **EVERYTHING**. **Listen to Paul’s confidence** - “*Therefore let no man glory in men. FOR ALL THINGS are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ [is] God’s.*”(I Cor.3:21-23) **Secondly**, Paul tells us: “*all things work together.*” The word translated “*work together*” means ‘to put forth power together with and thereby to assist’. In other words, God by His sovereign power moves heaven, earth, and hell in such a way as is eternally beneficial in the salvation of every object of His love. We have to quit thinking so much on an earthly plain, and consider these “*all things*” in light of an eternal and spiritual realm. I always think about Paul’s words to those at Corinth – “*For all things [are] for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward*

[man] is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding [and] eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal.”(II Cor.4:15-18) Paul told these Roman believers later in this epistle – “For the kingdom of God **is not** meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”(Rom.14:17) **Thirdly**, Paul declares that “all things work together **FOR GOOD**.” The word translated “for” means ‘into or UNTO’. The word translated “good” means ‘useful, salutary (producing a good result), a gift which is truly a gift’. This verse doesn’t tell us that “**ALL THINGS**” will appear to us as “good”. But it does tell us that ultimately **EVERYTHING** will “work together for good” for the objects of God’s love, those Christ redeemed and saved by His obedience unto death. In the context of this chapter, and particularly in light of that which is truly “good”, we’re talking about Christ and all He has purchased for His redeemed. Christ used the **SAME WORD** when He lovingly reprovved Martha over her concern that Mary wouldn’t help her – “And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: **But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.**”(Lk.10:41,42) Paul also used the same word in writing to the Roman believers about the promise of Christ’s coming – “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings **of good things.**”(Rom.10:15) So “all things work together for good” in bringing God’s elect to Himself. **Fourthly**, Paul declares this glorious promise is true for a **PARTICULAR PEOPLE** – “to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.” Most make the fact that “all things work together for good” conditioned on the sinner loving God. That’s not what the Apostle is setting forth. Matter of fact, these who “love God” only do so because “**the are the called according to PURPOSE.**” Paul will make this more clear when we look at **Vss.29-30** in the next message. **Let me say a couple things about this and we’ll close.** The word translated “the called” means ‘Divinely selected and appointed’. The word translated “to purpose” means ‘to set before one’s self, propose to one’s self, to purpose, **determine**’. The Holy Spirit makes it clear by Paul’s words that only those ‘Divinely selected or appointed’ according to God’s determinate will and purpose **WILL** and **DO** love God – “**We love him, because he first loved us.**”(I Jn.4:19). This love is begotten in the heart of the elect sinner in regeneration and conversion under the preaching the Gospel of salvation full and free based on the imputed righteousness of Christ alone – “**In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.**”(I Jn.4:9,10) For **ALL THESE** elect, redeemed, justified, regenerated and converted sons of God, “**ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.**” Do you see the beauty and simplicity in this wonderful truth? I hope you do.

Lord willing, we’ll expand on this in the next message where Paul’s sets forth an unbreakable chain of mercy and grace to the chief of sinners.