

96-08-16a

As we prepare to worship God through the study of his word this morning, let's turn for our scripture reading to Psalm 34. This portion of this psalm is quoted in one of the passages we're going to be looking at this morning in connection with our study of Romans chapter 8. The thing to watch for in this psalm this morning is the reference that David makes to what is good. When you see the word good, that's what we're looking at in Romans 8.28, and so this is a good place in the Old Testament to see that concept introduced.

David says, They looked to him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. The poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around all those who fear him and delivers them.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints.

There is no want to those who fear him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. Come, you children, listen to me.

I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good.

Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

He guards all his bones, not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be condemned. The Lord redeems the soul of his servants, and none who trust in him shall be condemned.

Among other interesting things in this psalm is the statement that we have seen made in different terms throughout Scripture that suffering is a part of our life, challenge and testing is a part of our life. And verse 19 tells us, many are the afflictions of the righteous, and that's a part of God's plan. So we should not be surprised when testing and affliction comes into our life.

That's a part of the life of the righteous. And the balancing factor of that is the fact that the Lord delivers the righteous out of all of those afflictions. And that comes into play as we resume our study in Romans chapter 8 this morning.

We have arrived at verse 28. We've reviewed in this letter that Paul wrote to the Romans what the purpose is of the Christian life. There was a false idea circulating in the early church about what the goal, what the means of living the Christian life was.

And it was based on the historical understanding that the Jews had had of their role in God's plan. And for centuries they had misunderstood and misapplied the Old Testament Scriptures and had tried to turn the law into a system of attaining righteousness instead of a system of reflecting righteousness. One of the things that we reviewed in the course of our study is the fact that the Old Testament commandments, the law of Moses, was never designed as a system of salvation, was it? No one was supposed to believe that by coming and doing the works of the law you could be saved.

The law was a system of function and a system of worship for those who were believers. To come under the authority of the law of Moses you came into the nation of Israel. You placed your faith in God and became an Israelite.

And the system of feasts and sacrifices and the system of commandments that were embodied in that law, that was for believers. It was a way of life for believers and it was a means of expressing love for God, a means of expressing love for one another. Jesus summed up the law of Moses in two commandments.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. He said all the law and the prophets are summed up in these. Is that a system of righteousness or is that a system for salvation or is that a system of living? That's not a way to get saved.

That's the command for someone who is saved. And that's really important to remember when we look at Romans because when Paul contrasts the law and grace, he's not contrasting salvation by works with salvation by grace. He's contrasting living, trying to attain righteousness by works versus trying to attain living righteousness through the grace of God.

And we're talking about the realm of the life of believers. We're not talking about how to get saved. And that's one of the things that tends to throw us off when we come to a book like Romans And we see the contrast that Paul makes between law and grace.

We think, well, salvation by works, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. And we think that the issue is how people are going to come to God and get saved. And that isn't the point.

The problem in the early days of the church was that as a holdover, most of the early Christians had been Jews and had been in the system of righteousness that they had been trained up in, which was a legalistic righteousness that you demonstrate that you're good by parading your prayers in the streets or your giving in the streets or your good works before men. And remember when Jesus came, he constantly said, when you do your good, do it in secret. And your father

who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. This was the big problem. This was the big misconception is that righteousness was attained by doing good.

And Paul, the apostle, was still fighting that battle in the early church. And he has gone to great lengths here in these first seven and a half chapters that we've studied to point out that righteousness is not something we do. Righteousness is something that God does in us.

And that through faith and through God's grace, we can be transformed. And as a result of that transformation, righteous works are accomplished. But going out and trying to do righteousness is not a means of pleasing God.

This was a big misconception. And both the Jews and the Gentiles in the early church, the Jews were telling these new Gentile converts to Christ, well, now that you're saved, this is the way to please God. This is the way to be righteous.

Get circumcised. Keep the feast. Let's get back to the law of Moses and achieve righteousness by doing these deeds.

And that's not how it happens. And so with all of these different arguments and all these different illustrations and examples, Abraham in chapter 4 of Romans, God declared Abraham righteous, not when he went up and was ready to plunge the knife into Isaac, but when he believed what God told him. That's when God declared Abraham righteous.

And that's the point that he's making. So we've seen here in chapter 8 that because of what Christ has done and because the law was a system to demonstrate our sinfulness, and that point has been made, now we are free from the law of sin and death. And because of what Christ has given us through his work and through his Spirit, we can now fulfill the righteousness that was supposed to be being expressed under the law.

In verse 4, the righteous requirement of the law can be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit. And notice again, we're in the realm of Christian life. The righteous requirement of the law was not for salvation.

It was for a productive, fruitful life as a believer. And that righteous requirement of the law is what can be fulfilled in us. And notice it isn't fulfilled in all believers.

It's fulfilled in those who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. We have a choice as believers whether or not our life is going to bear the fruit that God is looking for, whether or not our life is going to be pleasing. And it's a terrible thing that has happened in our modern Christianity.

It's the same thing that's been happening since the days of Christ and the days of Paul. And that

is that people measure one another and measure themselves by the works. Have you evangelized someone lately? Have you given? Have you participated in a ministry, a formal ministry at the church? Have you been out doing? What have you done? And when you converse with Christians, and they'll let it drop.

Well, when I was down at the John 3.16 mission or as I was doing this or that or the other, it just seems to kind of come up in conversation. And people will then chime in and say, well, they feel the need to justify their existence or to demonstrate that they are also fruitful by, well, we're having a Bible study or whatever. And we need to get away from that kind of thinking.

That's what Romans is trying to tell us is that the righteousness God is looking for is not in the outward and not in the visible. It's in what God does. He is at work in us to will and to do his good purpose.

So Paul is talking about the fact that that's why we have the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is mentioned so many times in this chapter because this is the difference. The Spirit of God is in us.

He helps us with our communication with the Father. He gives us new thoughts to think so that we are transformed on the inside. And now as we reach verse 28, Paul says, Now, this is a really well-known verse, and we quote it a lot, especially when we see that circumstances don't seem to be working out so well and we can't figure out why did God allow this to happen? Why did my loved one die? Why did this good thing that I thought was going to happen fall through? Why is it that I am in this difficult set of circumstances? And then someone will say, well, we know that all things work together for good, and we figure that there's going to be a silver lining and that somehow it's all going to come out all right in the end.

And that is often true, but that's not what Paul is saying here in verse 28. And so we're going to look at four things in verse 28. There are four main concepts.

If you read that verse, there are four things that really stand out, that if we understand those, we'll understand what Paul is saying in this verse and in the paragraph that follows it. First of all, we have pointed out, I think, last time that Paul starts out by saying we know. This is not a new concept that he's introducing.

This is something that is demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. In Paul's day, they had the Old Testament Scriptures, like Psalm 34, like Psalm 145, like Psalm 119, that talked about God and the way he deals with his people. And so this is not a new prophetic utterance that had never been spoken before.

This is something we know. And what is it that we know? Well, we're coming up on concept number one of these four. He says, we know that all things work together for good.

The concept of good is something we need to clarify so that we understand this verse and

understand what follows. We know that all things work together for good. Now, we could go in and agonize over the Greek.

There's been dispute over whether it's God that works all things together or whether the things themselves coordinate. It's fine the way it stands in the New King James. Some English translations say, we know that he works all things together for the good of those who love God.

And that's not a good translation. Paul purposely does not put an explicit subject in this verse. Obviously, anything that happens that accomplishes God's purpose is something that God does.

But Paul doesn't say God works all things together. And he also doesn't qualify this good by saying this is good for those who love God. And we'll clarify that as we go through.

So first of all, this translation in the New King James is just fine. We know that all things work together for good. But the good is a concept we need to clarify.

We either consciously or unconsciously tend to take this as our good, that as we view our life, we're going to see that this was good for us, that it worked out well. We think about our circumstances. We think about decisions we make or circumstances that happen to us.

And we say, well, I went out in the driveway and I had a flat tire, and it delayed me 10 minutes. I had to change the flat before I could get out and go to work. But then I found out there was a wreck on the road.

And see, all things work together for good. If I hadn't had that flat, I might have been involved in that wreck. And that's an exaggerated example.

But we tend to think about this verse in terms of my life turned out good, my circumstances were good, and the interaction of people, and whether or not someone heard the gospel or not, this was good. Well, let's take a look at this concept and see what the Bible has to say about good. First of all, this word for good is from the Greek word *agathos*, A-G-A-T-H-O-S.

Now, there are different words that are translated good or noble or worthy or whatever in Greek. This particular word is used almost exclusively for that concept of good that is in the realm of morality. When imbued in opposition to that which is evil, in the great grand scheme of things, what is it that is intrinsically good? A moral quality of good.

There's a different word, *kalos*, K-A-L-O-S, that talks about that which is noble, is admirable. We have other words in Greek that talk about something being better, like *krastos*, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S. Something is better than something else, relatively speaking.

This worked out better than if I had gone another way. As an aside, I will tell you that there is a case in the New Testament over in Peter where that word *krastos* has, in half of the manuscripts, it's *kristos*, the name of Christ, and in the other half it's *krastos*. There's just a difference of one

letter, an I instead of an E. The difference there makes the verse come out to say, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good or if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is Christ.

It's easy to see where once someone had mistaken the word as Christ, they would not want to change it and take the name of Christ out of a verse. So half of those manuscripts say, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is Christ, and the other half say, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. The reason that's significant especially is that we have another verse, and this is a verse I've never really understood.

I understand how people understand it, but it has never made good sense to me literarily speaking. You remember when Paul is writing and he says, but for me to live is Christ and to die is gain? To have a predicate adjective actually be a predicate noun, if you're looking at it in English, is kind of strange. For me to live is Christ.

It's a poetic statement and that's not a poetic section in Paul's writing. I suspect that this is another case where Christos originally stood in that passage, and what Paul in that argument he's saying, for me to stay and be with you is good, for me to go and be with the Lord would be better, and he's saying for me to live is a better thing, and to die is even better than that, but I wouldn't quibble. There's no manuscript that has the word Christos standing there, so if that was a change it happened very early, but I offer you that as a point for consideration when you hit that.

For me Paul is saying life is great and dying is even better, and that word for good there or better is Christos. We have many different words in Greek that express something that's advantageous or is better, and the word that we have here is selected by Paul for a very specific reason. This is as close as you will get to a technical word in Greek for something.

It's used consistently for a concept, and here we know that all things work together for good. We don't say, well, my circumstances worked out for a moral good. We would tend to say a circumstantial good of some sort, but this word here talks about a moral good, and this is the word that is used to describe God.

In the Old Testament when they translated it into Greek, and in Psalm 34 we read this morning, taste and see that the Lord is good, it's agathos. It's good of intrinsic quality, the moral good in opposition to that which is evil. And so right away when we see this, especially in Greek, that all things work together for good, we're going to see that this is the good that characterizes God's purpose, that characterizes God himself, that this is going to lean us in the direction of viewing all things in terms of what it does in God's plan, not so much what it does in our plan.

All things work together for good. So if you're taking notes, we're going to have some points here now on the good, and this is not necessarily a laundry list, but we're going to look at some passages that address this idea of the agathos type of good. And by the time we look at these scriptures, when we come back and see that all things work together for good, I think we'll have a

clear understanding of what it is that Paul is saying.

As we mentioned at the close of the lesson last time, scripture has a lot to say about the good. And I mentioned last time that believers are to prove it, to cling to it, to work it, to follow after it, to be zealous of it, to imitate it, to overcome evil with it. Government is a minister of good.

We have the benefits of the good through Christ. Scripture has a lot to say about this agathos good. So we're going to look at those passages this morning, and if you didn't get that list, it's coming up again as we go through.

First of all, and this is not an exhaustive study, I just want to be sure we understand this word and its context here. So first of all, scripture tells us that recognizing the good requires a transformation of our mind. This agathos good, if we're going to recognize it, if we're going to see it in life, our mind has to be transformed.

Now, again, this is going to draw out a distinction. Anyone, any unbeliever can say, to me, wasn't that wonderful the way that this person showed up at just the right time and a good thing resulted in my life. I was short on cash.

I needed a big sale in my job, and here came this client out of the blue, and it worked out great. I got the sale. I had the big commission, and everything worked out good.

Anyone can recognize that type of fortuitous confluence of circumstances. The agathos good requires a transformed mind to appreciate, to perceive, and that's given to us in this book, Romans chapter 12, verse 2. You might just turn a few pages over there, and we'll be getting here before long. Paul says in 12.2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove, and that word prove is dokimazo, to test for the purpose of approval, to look at something closely, to analyze it, and find out that it's approved, so that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The word for good there is agathos, and it's especially interesting when you read this in Greek because it's not quite the same as it is in English. If you were to translate this literally, the last part of this verse, it says that you may approve, perceive, test, and find to be present what is the will of God, and then there are three words that describe that will of God. The transformation of our mind enables us to prove the will of God, the good, the acceptable, the perfect.

That's what it says in Greek. Transforming our mind enables us to analyze and see the will of God. The will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect, and that word for good there is agathos.

That sums up the will of God. So we need a transformed mind to see that, and when we look at a confluence of circumstances that works out well, are we looking at our own benefit or are we looking at the accomplishment of the purposes of God? Many times the thing that stimulates us and makes us happy may not have any part of the plan of God. David may have been very

thrilled when Bathsheba came up to his room and said, well, didn't this work out well? I just happened to be on the balcony, just happened to see her, and now here she is and we're having a great time.

He could say at that moment, isn't this good? But that was by no means a part of the plan of God. And again, that's an exaggerated illustration, but we have to be careful because we tend to say, well, didn't that work out well because we perceive a benefit to ourselves rather than looking at was this a part of the will of God? Was this a part of the purpose of God? Can I see the forward progress of what God is up to in human history in this circumstance? And that's what we're watching for. So that's our first point.

It requires a transformed mind to see that good, that kind of good. The unbeliever has no concept of the purposes of God being accomplished. The transformation of the mind is required to see it.

Secondly, Scripture tells us that clinging to that good, that acceptable and perfect purpose of God, is essential to fulfilling God's command to us, which is to walk in love. The love that we're commanded to have, it's in this first Romans 8.28, those who love God, love for God, love for one another, the two greatest commandments. If we're going to fulfill those commands to love God and to love one another, clinging to the good is essential.

Clinging to the good is essential to fulfilling those commands to love. And we have this also in Romans chapter 12, this time in verse 9. Romans chapter 12, verse 9. And here Paul says, let love be without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. And in Greek this just says, abhor the evil, cling to the good.

But notice the context here. We tend to think, well, good and evil, this is bad deeds and good deeds and so forth. But look at what surrounds this.

He has talked about in the preceding several verses about operation in the body of Christ. He's talked about in verse 5, we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. We have different gifts according to the grace that is given to us.

So let us use those gifts. We know that spiritual gifts are specifically designed to build up and edify the body of Christ from Ephesians 4. And so we have prophecy, we have ministry, we have teaching, exhortation, giving and leadership and mercy and so forth mentioned here. These are all things that interact between believers.

And then he says, let your love in the body of Christ, in this context, be without hypocrisy. Don't have a superficial forced attitude and action towards someone that belies what's really going on in the soul. To have genuine love for one another as believers, we abhor what is evil and cling to what is good.

And look at the next verse. Be kindly affectionate toward one another with brotherly love in honor

giving preference to one another. So this abhorring what is evil and clinging to what is good is set right in the center of this set of exhortations about love for one another.

And right at the center of it, if we're focused on the purpose of God, if we're focused on the plan of God and the accomplishment of His goals, if that's our focus and that's our priority, it's going to enable us to have this kind of love. It's an essential part. Clinging to the good enables us.

It's essential to fulfilling the commands to love one another. Now, thirdly, Scripture tells us that accomplishing this good is going to be a part of our life. We have three basic realms of life, which is our relationship with God, our relationship with our fellow believers, and our relationship with the rest of the world.

These have been put under the headings of priesthood, ministry, and ambassadorship. The function of our priesthood as believers is the area of our relationship with God. Ministry is our area between fellow believers.

And ambassadorship is our role with those in the world. And Scripture tells us that this idea of the good is involved at the heart of all three of those areas of relationship. So, and these may be a little bit backward, but this is the order that they came up in Scripture.

So, as our third point, accomplishing the good is reflected in good citizenship. This is our role in our country, our role with regard to the outside world and society in general. Accomplishing the good is reflected in good citizenship.

Now, this is going to be convicting for some of us, I think, because especially those of us that tend to get activist and want to try to change things in the government or change things in the policy of the United States and so forth. We don't find any examples of the apostles or Jesus and the disciples picketing or demonstrating or going and registering grievances with the government that existed. And that government was guilty of many excesses and many abuses and many policies that we would certainly find repugnant and that I'm sure the Lord and believers found repugnant.

But you don't find an activist example in the New Testament. And we can make a case for that, and a lot of believers do, that say, well, you've got to participate. Part of being a good citizen is trying to change your government where it's wrong.

And without arguing against that directly, let's take a look at what Scripture says. Take a look at Romans chapter 13 and verse 4. This Romans 13 begins by talking about the relationship between the Christian and government. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

Well, wait a minute. What if they're evil? What if their policies are... What if they're inflicting confiscatory taxes? What if they're abusive and so forth? It doesn't qualify this statement. It says, let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

Paul is writing to believers in Rome, in the capital of the pagan government that existed in the day. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God, evil or otherwise.

Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. And this is the judgment of God. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.

Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. And this statement in verse 3, when it says, do what is good, that's the word *agathos*, accomplish the purpose of God. Now, Paul goes on to explain this.

He talks about government. He is God's minister to you for good. God has established the concept of government and civil authority to give us an environment in which we can accomplish the good, which is what God is doing in us and through us.

The transformation, spiritual growth, the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit happens in a structured environment. God has created this structure in nations, and we're going to see a little later He's also created that structure in the local church. And the reason that structure exists is to create an environment where we can produce the good in our souls.

Not necessarily good works per se. Not necessarily that what the government calls upon us to do is good, but the existence of the government, the existence of these authorities, creates an environment in which we can produce the good. Peter is going to address this here shortly.

But notice as Paul continues, he says that the government is God's minister to you for good. If you do evil, be afraid, for He does not bear the sword in vain. He is God's minister and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

Therefore you must be subject not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Because of this you pay taxes. They are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

Render therefore to all their due, taxes to whom taxes are due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. And the point that we have here is expressed and completed by Peter over in 1 Peter chapter 2. And Peter answers some of the questions that we might have arise as we see what Paul says here.

1 Peter 2 verse 13. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme or to governors as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Now sometimes we have ignorant foolish men in the government. We have ignorant foolish policies and we may have confiscatory taxes imposed on us and so forth. But by doing good, by functioning as believers, pursuing the will of God under those conditions and paying the confiscatory taxes and obeying the silly laws and so forth, our doing of good puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Now this is not putting to silence the foolish ignorant men. This puts to silence their foolishness and their ignorance. And there is a larger debate that is being waged.

There is a larger point that is being made. And when we function even under bad government and we bear the fruit of the Spirit and we have peace and we have patience and we conform and we obey without a lot of bile and without a lot of mental attitude sin and sin of the tongue, the foolishness of those policies is put to silence. It's not by picketing.

It's not by railing and seeking to overthrow the government, for example. We put their foolishness and their ignorance to silence by even in those conditions and even under those circumstances producing that which is good because in God's eyes that's the judgment that counts. And when we are in a position of suffering and in a position of persecution and in a position of being taken advantage of by an evil and foolish government, focusing on the good, recognizing that that government exists because God allows it, because God designed the system where there is government, and pursuing the accomplishment of the good in our soul, that puts to silence.

The way I look at it personally is even if I'm having to pay a 30 or 35 percent tax rate of everything that I make, it's God that gives me the employment. It's God that determines what salary I make. It's God's job by His own design and from His own promise to provide everything that I need.

And if there's this big tax chunk, well then God is the one that's having to provide for it and allow for it and leave me enough afterwards to live on. And it's an issue between God and those evil governments and their practices, and God will judge. If I focus on the fact that whatever I have left over came from God, if I focus on doing the good, let God deal with the government.

They exist by His authority and so forth. And to not be distracted, to not be diverted from the good by these things. And it's a matter of focus.

I don't think it's personally good how much I lose from my income to taxes, but I don't dwell on it and I don't worry about it because God's the one that's having to make provision for me and He's just going to have to provide enough that after all these confiscatory things are taken care of, I have what I need. And their foolishness and ignorance will be put to silence. Notice what Peter says as he continues.

We're free, but we don't use our liberty as a cloak for vice. We are bond servants of God. Honor all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

And he says this is commendable in verse 19, if because of conscience toward God we endure grief and suffer wrongfully. And this takes place under government. We endure grief, we suffer wrongfully, but it's commendable if we do this because of conscience, if we endure it because we recognize that there's something more important.

What credit is it if we're beaten for our faults, you take it patiently, but when you do good, and this is agathos, if you're pursuing the plan of God and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. Remember what David said in Psalm 34? The righteous are going to endure affliction. It's a part of life.

It's what you do under that affliction that counts. Do you focus on the affliction or do you focus on the good? That's what we're after here. So accomplishing the good is reflected in good citizenship, in obeying laws even when they're silly, in paying taxes even when they're high, in enduring the foolishness and ignorance of people in government even when it causes us grief.

Fourthly, following the good. Remember now we've had perceiving or recognizing the good in our first point. We've had clinging to the good in our second point.

We've had accomplishing the good. This is the Greek word poieo, to make or to do, as a part of good citizenship in our third point. Now in our fourth point we have following the good.

Following the good is essential to ambassadorship. If we want to have opportunities to share Christ, if we want to be used by God to bring others to Christ and to His kingdom, following the good is essential. Now we tend to think that having a snappy presentation, having a clear argument, having the Roman road at our fingertips, having the wordless book, having some tool is the means of being an effective witness.

Scripture says following after the good, pursuing personally the accomplishment of God's purpose. That's what makes us effective as ambassadors for Christ. And we find this in 1 Peter, right where we are, 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 13 through 17.

1 Peter 3, 13 through 17. Let me get over there in my English rather than Greek. Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? This once again is in, you can start back up in verse 8, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tender hearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this that you may inherit a blessing.

And then here's a quote, and guess where this quote is from? Psalm 34. He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. His ears are open to their prayers.

We covered prayer last time. One of the things that can hinder our prayer is failing in this regard. His ears are open to the prayer of the righteous and his face is against those who do evil.

Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. If you're pursuing the good and these afflictions and bad things come on, you're still blessed. Do not be afraid of their threats, do not be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

If we pursue what is good, if we follow after it, that is going to raise a question in people's mind. They're going to ask, where do you get this hope? How can you be so happy under this affliction? You're suffering wrongfully. Why is it that that doesn't get under your skin? How come you're not railing and protesting and trying to get out from under this? Because our focus is in a different place.

We've got our minds set on something that we can see because we've been transformed, and that's a witness. People are going to ask. People are going to be ashamed when they see that good conscience, when we see the good hope and the good focus that we have.

It is better if it is the will of God to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. And if we're pursuing the good and still suffering, that's good in the eyes of God. So it's essential to our ambassadorship.

Fifthly, doing the good is going to be the basis of our judgment as believers. Now, this is true of believers of every age. We're not going to be judged on how well the circumstances of our lives turned out.

We're not going to be judged by our body count. How many did we witness to and bring into the kingdom? How many did we minister to? What were the numbers and the types of ministries that we engaged in? What was our attendance record? All the things that are on the envelope at a lot of churches. Did you bring your Bible? Did you bring a friend? Did you study the quarterly and so forth? Those are not the basis for the judgment.

And this is true both of believers in the age of Israel and believers in this age. So doing the good, that's the basis of our judgment before God. We saw this in Romans 2, verse 7. You might just turn back in the light of what we've seen this morning.

Note and review what Paul said there. It says that God will render to each one according to his deeds. Eternal life, life that partakes of the divine.

This is eternal life in terms of quality, not in terms of duration. Eternal life to those who by patient

continuance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality. We know that salvation from the lake of fire is not based on what we do, but the judgment seat of Christ is based on what we do.

And if we patiently continue in doing good, if we're seeking for glory and honor and immortality, God will give us the life that partakes of the divine. It's the fullness and the completeness of what God has for us in the eternal future. To those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, there will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, whether they're Jewish or Greek.

But look at verse 10, glory, honor, and peace. We're not talking about just salvation from the lake of fire here. These are the rewards and the benefits that come to us in the eternal future.

Glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good. That's the point of our life. When we look at the day, when we look at the week, have we been pursuing what is good? Have we been pursuing the accomplishment of God's purpose? It's not a matter of deeds.

It's a matter of what goes on in our soul as we have been seeing and will continue to see. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will complete our brief review of what Scripture has to say about what is good.

And then we're going to look at the second of these four concepts in Romans 8.28. And that's the calling to those who are called according to his purpose. So we'll take a break. And when we come back, we'll see those things.