

96-09-06a

As we prepare to resume our study of Romans this evening, let's stop as we always do and take a moment to calm ourselves, to clear our minds and free ourselves of distractions and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit so that God's purpose in our worship and our fellowship and our instruction in the Word will be accomplished. Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for the wonderful privilege that we have of living in this age of taking advantage of each and every day.

We thank you for the truth of your Word. We thank you for the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. We pray that we will be able to avail ourselves of those provisions tonight as we study this book.

We pray that as a result we will be nourished up and equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. An administrative note, we have been studying Romans on Friday nights and 2 Samuel on Sunday mornings.

We are closing in on the end of our 2 Samuel study which will actually go into the first two chapters of 1 Kings so that we will complete the life and the reign of David and that will take place in seven or eight more lessons depending on how well I do at sticking to my schedule. When that finishes, our Roman study that we have been having on Friday nights will move to Sunday and on Friday nights we're going to take a break and do some categorical studies on some of the basic things that we should keep clear in our minds. It doesn't matter how long we've been studying.

It is essential that we go back and review the fundamental truths that affect us as believers, the things that help us understand who we are, why we're here, what happened to us at salvation. That's a great thing in case we have the opportunity to share the gospel with others. A recent review of what happens at salvation, these are not going to be great deep post-hole studies but they will cover in the space of several weeks those things that condition all of the other study that we do in the Word of God and we'll be doing that on Friday nights probably starting in November.

So just as a preparatory warning for that. But we resume tonight in Romans chapter 8. Once again, just to set the stage very briefly for what we're studying. This book is addressing itself to the Christian life.

The theme of the book, the reason Paul wrote it, is to talk to us as believers about the way that we live life after salvation. And he has discussed the things that happened at salvation, what Christ did when he came and died, the system that he freed us as a race from, the system of the law that was put in place by God to demonstrate our sin, our ineffectual energies, the fact that we can't establish our own righteousness by anything that we do. Having done that, God has now, after having accomplished our salvation through Christ, inaugurated a new age and a new way of doing things.

And it's a wonderful age because we are not held to a standard of works. Nobody can measure us in terms of righteousness by what we do or by how much we do it. How many people did we

witness to? How many did we evangelize? What ministry are we engaged in? How often do we participate in any given Christian activity? It's irrelevant.

Those things are important and they are products of what God does in us through His Word and through His Spirit, but they are not the means by which we please God. They are not the means by which we stand before God declared righteous. Our righteousness comes through faith.

And the lid is off in this age. There's not a script for how to live life. For some of us, that's a scary thing.

Some people just by personality do better if they're handed a script or a list of tasks, a list of steps. And we go step one, step two, step three, and having checked off those things on the list, we are done. However, hopefully God put all those people, spiritually speaking, in the Old Testament age because we're in the New Testament age and we live on principle.

We live on priorities. We live on the inner life of the Spirit, not the outer life of energy. Now, this is not to say that we don't do anything in the Christian life.

What it says is that our deeds and the ministries we engage in, the giving that we may do, the praying, the Bible study, the ministry, the evangelism, and so forth, those things are products and results in God's plans, not the means to an end. If we get to feeling a little guilty or get to feeling like we're lagging behind in God's plan, if we get to feeling like we've not fulfilled our responsibility as believers, the thing to do is not go look for something to do, not to look for some ministry or some place to go and work and feel like we've now sort of evened the score with God. The place to pursue the Christian life and the place to pursue righteousness and God's approval is in the heart.

And in a way, it's a much higher standard. It's a much harder thing because we live in a visible world that tugs us in a hundred different directions. But this is the most important thing.

It's the only reason we stand here as an assemblage of and draw breath and go through life. There's no other reason to be here. There's no other purpose that has any longevity in terms of its effect.

Even if you become a great historical figure, history itself is going to be rolled up like a blanket and stowed away. And the fact that is a wonderful and revered president does him absolutely no good at this point. He is completely and totally dead and has no idea of what his effect was as a president or how many people have read his biography or anything else.

And so as far as he personally is concerned, the fruit, the lasting fruit of his life is whatever he did in his life before God as a believer. And the same is true of Robert E. Lee or anyone else in history. And it's especially true of us.

What does it profit a man if you gain the whole world and lose your soul? And that can happen as believers. If we wind up at the end of this life, having been given every resource by God and not having employed it in God's purpose, we're bankrupt. We will arrive in the eternal future by the skin of our teeth, scripture says.

So Paul wants us to avoid that. God, the Holy Spirit, God's purpose in having Paul write this letter and in preserving it down to our day is to give us the opportunity to avoid that fate, to understand what life is all about and how to get it done. One of the most frustrating things, you've heard me say this before, is to be told the way it ought to be and not be given how to do it.

Well, this is a how-to book. And Paul starts in the first half of the book by saying, here's the way not to do it. The way to please God is not to run around trying to do good works.

That's not the answer. If you do it the right way, good works are going to flow as naturally as your hair growing. It's just going to happen as an inevitable product of what God does on the inside.

He's covered that in the first half of the book. Now we're in chapter eight and we have come to this pivotal verse, Romans 8.28. Paul has reviewed many things in the chapter. We will touch on those as we go through Romans 8.28. But what does this verse say? It says, Now we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Now last time, and nobody was here for last time that's here tonight, so last time we began by pointing out in this verse, Romans 8.28, that there are four main concepts. If we can nail down these four concepts, we're going to understand Romans 8.28 and everything that comes after it in this chapter and in this book. And you can just look at the big nouns in this verse.

First of all, he says, We know. Why does he say we know? He could have just started out and said, All things work together for good. But he says, Look, we know that all things work together for good.

And it's our knowledge of that fact that makes a difference. It isn't just the abstract fact that everything's going to come right in the end. It's the fact that we know that and it ought to make a difference.

Well, what is it that we know? The second thing, it says, All things work together for good. So number two big concept in this verse is the good. What exactly is this good referring to? The third concept is, and fourth concept, are the two qualifiers on this verse.

It would be great to just say all things because there are two qualifications before this is true. The first is, all things work together for good. In the case of, and I went through the Greek last week, I won't believe that, but this case means that in this sphere where these people are concerned, all things work together for good.

Who are these people? They're the people that love God. All believers do not love God. Love of God is not automatic.

It isn't instantaneous. It doesn't come in a blinding, lightning flash. It comes the way all love comes through perception, through getting to know someone and coming to appreciate that someone over time.

How do you come to love someone? You spend time with them. You find out about them. What is their character? What are their preferences? What are their likes and dislikes? What is their purpose in life? What are they shooting for? If there's a guy and his goal in life is to be the greatest disco dancer since Saturday Night Fever and some girl wants to be Jane Goodall and work with monkeys in Africa, their purposes are completely at odds.

There's not going to be a big flaming love between these people because their purposes are so widely diverse. Those who love God, we've seen in scriptures, we looked at John chapter 15 last time. What did Jesus say? If you love me, you'll pay attention to my words.

If you love me, you'll know my commandments and you'll keep them. You'll get in on the ground floor of this plan and care about it if you love me. So those who love God are going to demonstrate that love, demonstrate that positive attitude toward God by prioritizing the things of God.

A husband who loves his wife prioritizes things where his wife is concerned. It doesn't mean that every single time there's a conflict, well, you know, it's my wife's birthday but then I have to go to work for a big meeting, well, it's her birthday, that's the priority. But it's a high priority and it often takes precedence over other things because that's a manifestation of love.

A wife who loves her husband is going to do things that in other circumstances wouldn't be her first choice of things to do. I think it's an incredible, wonderful thing that laundry gets done and cleaning gets taken and picked up and meals get made and all of these things because there's somebody that loves me enough to do that and enjoys doing it because she loves me. It just is incredible.

I don't know if the roles are reversed. I don't know if I would qualify. But it's a tremendous thing.

But why is that the case? Laundry and meals and all that stuff is not intrinsically fun but it becomes literally a labor of love. And when that's a reciprocal situation, that's when there's a genuine presence of love. Well, that's what this verse says.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God. There is a subset of people in the larger set of all believers, there's a subset of believers and I'm sorry to say that it seems to be a relative minority that really love God and pursue relationship with Him above other things. It's not like the number three priority or the number four priority.

It's the number one priority and everything else in life is conditioned on that priority. I love God. I'm going to pursue my relationship with God and everything else in my life is going to have to work around that priority.

That's love for God. In that case, Paul says, all things work together for good. The second qualifier is this last phrase, in the case of those who are the called according to His purpose.

Now right away all of our theology kicks in and we say, well, but all believers are called. There's the effectual call that God puts out and when God calls, people answer. There's no such thing as rejecting the call of God.

This is an effectual call in many systems of theology, which boils down to the way that a lot of people understand scripture is that God gives a call and by golly, if God calls, you will answer, you will come. If you don't come, well then you must not have been called because calling produces a result. So we also looked last time at this concept of calling and I just want to review quickly these points in terms of the calling.

Then we're going to come back and review the good because that's really the crux of this whole thing. But it says that all things work together for good to those who are the called according to His purpose. Scripture has a lot to say about our calling.

1 Corinthians 1.26 is the verse that says, not many mighty are called. It's that context where God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and it says not many mighty are called. Well, to put this in a nutshell, probably the best way to get past our, we've heard the word call so much, it's like saved in some of our other words.

It no longer makes a dent in our mind in a lot of cases. In English we might say that God has summoned, God has summoned us. Now what is a summons? Well, in the legal sense you get a summons, you're supposed to come up here at court.

A king, this is often used in royal situations, the king has summoned me, I must present myself before the king or the IRS has summoned me for an audit. And the summons is issued and the idea here is that it is expected that you will respond. If a king issues a summons, if the court, if the IRS issues a summons, you're expected to appear.

Now, do you get great glory and honor if you respond to the summons? Does someone pat you on the back and say, oh boy, I'm so glad it's expected your attendance? However, it does not affect your response, it doesn't make you come, it says come on and you're expected to come. The reveille bugle and the call to formation in the military, that's a summons. You get no ribbons, you get no glory, you get no letters of commendation if you show up for formation.

There is a penalty if you fail and that is the nature of the calls that God issues. God's calls are not effectual. Now, this almost sounds like blasphemy.

You mean God can do something that's not effective? How dare you? But it's the truth and you can demonstrate it throughout scripture. We'll see shortly in 1 Peter where Peter says that we have been called with a holy calling. We're called to holiness.

Is every believer holy? No. Well, God called us all to be holy. He says, be ye holy for I am holy.

That's a summons, that's a call, that's a command. Does everyone obey every command that God issues? They don't. What does that mean? His command was ineffectual in those cases.

The desired result did not come about. So God is not a prisoner of his own power. It isn't when he says something, it must come to pass.

If he gives a command, it must happen or he's not God anymore. God is greater than that. We put God in a box and we make him like King Midas and a prisoner of his own power and that's just not the case.

God is powerful enough to give us free will and to let us exercise it and a lot of us exercise it the wrong way. So the fact that we're a believer does not mean we're going to be on the upward climb automatically. There's no perseverance of the saints taught in scripture.

The calling is an opportunity. It's a summons to a mission and that's what we're supposed to do. And so in Ephesians 1.18, Paul says, I pray to God that you will come to understand what the hope of your calling is.

That if you fulfill that summons from God, here's what you can expect in the eternal future. Paul says, I hope, I pray to God that you will get some grasp in your mind of what the expectation is of the things that are coming to those believers who respond to God's call in this life. Now you notice I switched a little bit, haven't I? Because we were talking about a call to salvation.

If you read theological writing about calling, it all centers around salvation. That God calls all men to Christ and to salvation and so forth. And it all centers on salvation.

We need to be focusing on the call to believers. We need to be focusing on the call to believers. We're already saved.

We're already believers, but we have been summoned to fulfill a specific mission, to fulfill God's purpose. And that's what this verse is talking about. To those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose, we've got to be aware that there's a mission.

We've been asked by God. We've been summoned by God to do something. What is it? Well, that's what we're going to focus on here.

And it is all summed up in that word, the good. So Ephesians 4.1, Paul says, walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called. That's an exhortation.

If we automatically did it, we wouldn't have a command, would we? Paul says, you've had a calling. Walk in line with that. Live your life in the light of this call that God has issued.

Philippians 3.14, Paul says, I don't slack back. I press toward the goal, the prize of the upward call. There's a prize at the end of this.

There's a reward at the end of the fulfillment of this call. And that's what we're called to. In First Thessalonians 2, 11 through 13, this is a great passage for two reasons.

One, it talks about our call. And secondly, it's all in the present tense. The Thessalonian church was the most mature of all the groups that Paul wrote letters to that are preserved in scripture.

They were the farthest along. They were a retired military community. And they had really responded to the time that Paul had spent with them teaching them.

So he writes in this letter, and he says, God has called us to his kingdom and to his glory. And he doesn't say has called. He said, God is calling us.

We're believers. We're down the roadways as believers, and God is still calling us. It's a present, every day calling.

It's an ongoing summons from God to accomplish this purpose. In Second Thessalonians 2, 14 and 15, Paul says that a part of this summons is we've been summoned to the glory of Jesus Christ. We've been called to participate in his glory, to reflect his glory.

That's a part of it. In Second Timothy 1, 9, Paul says, we are, in fact, he uses the same phrase he uses here in Romans. We are called according to his purpose.

So it's not just a summons, you know, come hither. It's in accordance with a purpose. God has a specific mission and a plan.

We're going to see this word purpose also tonight. And finally, you can look at Hebrews 3, 1, where the author of Hebrews says, he says, you saints, you partakers of the heavenly calling. It's an ongoing call.

He says, if you're a partaker, then consider Jesus. Take a look at our apostle, our high priest. If you're going to respond to this, focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's a great thing for objectivity because he doesn't say, you partakers of the heavenly calling, think about yourselves, you know, gratify yourselves, pursue your goals. He says, look at Jesus Christ. He set aside everything to fulfill the plan of the father.

He didn't get married. He didn't build a house. He didn't have a regular job.

He totally devoted himself to the fulfillment of God's will. God seldom calls us to that much

separation from the things of the world, but the priority needs to be the same. Anything that interferes with pursuing the prize at the end of that upward call has got to get subordinated to fulfilling this calling.

So that's the other condition, love for God. And what does that imply? We need to know his word. We need to know what the plan is.

We need to know something about God. And the more we look in his word and see the way he has dealt, the way he is dealing, what he's going to do, we are going to love God. He is intrinsically good.

He is the greatest and most wonderful object of love. He's a gracious and compassionate heavenly father. He knocks himself out literally to care for us and to include us in his plan.

And so when we focus on him, we will develop that love and we will see what our calling is. Now, that's Romans 8.28. Got those four concepts. We have to know these things.

By the way, let me just point something out about this, we know business. And you can go all through scripture and talk about scriptures that talk about what we know or what we should know. Here in Romans, Paul says things like, we know this and do you not know that and so forth.

To Paul's mind and in God's mind, what we know ought to influence what we do. You know, sometimes you can know that your tires are threadbare and yet you might still drive 75 miles an hour and you're just asking for a blowout and a severe wreck. You know that your tires are not suitable for that speed, but you do it anyway.

Well, that knowledge is not a life-changing knowledge. It's not an effectual knowledge. When Paul says we know something, he implies that this ought to change the way we act.

And so, for example, in this same book, remember back in Romans 5.3, he was talking about we've been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And through him, we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Paul says we stand in Jesus Christ and we're looking at where this calling is going to take us. Not only that, but we glory in trials.

We glory in suffering. We glory in our problems. Now, think about your most recent tribulation, your most recent problem.

I can think of one. My car is still down in the shop with a big hole in my cooling system. I can think of several others that face me at work today.

Now, here's the quiz question. Do we glory in that testing? Do we say, yeah, bring it on. Give me more.

I'm up for it. I'm ready. What does it mean to glory in tribulation? Well, Paul gives the answer here because he says we glory in tribulations knowing something.

We don't glory in them just because we're fools and we like masochistic lifestyles. We glory in tribulations because we know something. We know that these tests lead to something.

They're not just obstacles in our path. It's not just someone shoving us down and sticking our face in the dirt and stepping on our neck. These tests and trials as believers who love God and who are looking at the purpose for which we're here, we welcome these things.

We glory in them because they lead to something. We've talked before about being in the, of course, Dan's here. Maybe I won't talk about being in the dentist chair.

But you know, you can endure suffering in the dentist chair because you know it's going to lead to something. You're going to have the ability to bite into corn chips and not have pain. Or you're going to have the ability to eat hot and cold foods and not go into spasms of terrible discomfort.

And because of that, we endure things. Well, that's the attitude we should have about the daily tribulations of life. And it may be something that catches us completely off guard.

Who would have thought that there would be a big leak in the ceiling and that the, after all that work, it has to be redone. Or yeah, you can look when you go in the bathroom there, there's a big brown spot. I'm speaking from experience.

You know, who would have thought that this particular thing that seems so awful would be a part of God's plan? Well, we don't think that unless we know something. And Paul says in 5.3, we know that these tribulations produce perseverance. And perseverance leads to character.

And character leads to hope. What is hope? That's looking at the purpose for all of these things. It's looking ahead to when we are reunited with Jesus Christ, when we reflect His glory in the eternal future and we see the fulfillment and accomplishment of God's purpose.

It's worth it. Some of us have played a sport or been in a position where you want to work out and develop your strength. Even as we all age and get older, it's good to exercise.

It keeps your bones in line. It keeps your joints from slipping. It keeps your back from pinching nerves and so forth.

Exercise is essential just for the general health and maintenance of your body. It is not pleasant while you're doing it in many cases. If you're pumping iron or you're running up and down stairs or whatever it is that you do, it's not pleasant.

It's not your first choice of things to do. Why do we do it? Because we know it's going to result in something. And we're firmly convinced.

We've seen it happen before. We know that we feel better. We sleep better.

We eat better. We look better. We lose weight, whatever it may be.

Because our experience tells us that and it's a firm knowledge, we do it. We should have the same confidence and the same attitude in the spiritual realm that when somebody knifes us in the back, when somebody says they were going to do something and they don't do it, now we're out there flapping in the breeze from a tall pole to calm down and say, well, now wait a minute. Am I just so wrapped up in the accomplishment of this task that my happiness depends on it? Or do I recognize that this is the kind of thing God said would come and here's a chance to flex my spiritual muscles.

Here's a chance to think about who I am and why I'm really here. I'm here to learn how to think under pressure, to learn how to trust God and to see his purpose and his plan rather than this earthly situation. And if we can do that and when we do that, we wind up saying, it's not so bad.

It's all just earthly stuff. It's going to be rolled up like a blanket. I'm still going to be in the eternal future and we can glory in our tribulation.

That's something we know and it ought to make a difference. Other scriptures just right here in Romans you can look at are Romans 3.19. We know that the law demonstrates sin. That knowledge ought to tell us don't pursue good works as a means of righteousness.

Don't try to work up to God's standard by what we do because we know that the standard of good deeds by which people measure, that's designed to show how we fall short. If you say I'm going to always be on time and never be late, well the first time you're late you've just demonstrated that you're a fallen creature and that there's a fallen world and obstacles get in your way and you can't keep a perfect standard. So we know that and it ought to keep us from making a wrong step.

Paul mentions the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15.58. He says knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord as you carry on through and you're the victim of one thing and another, we know that it's not for nothing. It may seem like it turned out to be nothing in this life. You may have knocked yourself out on something and it winds up being irrelevant.

You worked your tail off and it turns out yeah somebody forgot to tell you that it doesn't have to be done. Well and you wind up saying I just I wasted that time. We didn't waste it.

If we attack that as unto the Lord, if we work through it and maintain a good attitude because we were thinking you know this is the kind of mental test, the kind of spiritual test that God is using to strengthen me and give me peace and give me happiness, then it's not in vain. It doesn't matter if any if it winds up working out for anything or not. Paul says knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain no matter what you're doing.

You know I had a well everybody has examples of that. And finally 2 Corinthians 4.14 and following. This is a great one.

I'm going to turn to this 2 Corinthians 4.14. Notice that all of these that we've looked at talk about what we know and then it tacks it on to looking to the future. We know that we're going to be raised with Christ for example. We know here in 2 Corinthians 4.14 Paul says knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus and will present us.

He doesn't just say we're going to be raised, we're going to be presented. That makes a difference. He doesn't say well we hang on because we know we're going to be resurrected and live in the eternal future.

We're going to be resurrected and then we're going to be presented. And that's why Jesus wants to present a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing but it should be holy and without blemish. That's the church.

That's after being saved. He wants to present us with righteousness in this life. That's the goal.

That's God's purpose. And we know that and because we know that he says in verse 15 look at this. All things are for your sakes so that grace having spread through many may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

This is God's purpose. In the eternal future we may have suffered the slings and arrows of many outrageous fortunes down here. All kinds of bad stuff will happen.

It's a promise of God. Do not expect a wonderful rose petal life. Jesus said in this world you will have tribulation.

Jesus said it and it's so. You're going to suffer. It's inevitable.

It's going to happen. So what do you do with it? Are you beaten by it? Are you depressed by it? Do you let it rob you of your happiness? Does it rob you of your peace? Does it make you miserable? If so, Satan wins and we lose. The whole goal of these things is to perfect us, to complete us, to teach us things about God that we can't learn in a perfect eternal future.

So in verse 16 he says therefore we do not lose heart even though our outward man is perishing. Now this goes beyond your odd poor circumstance. You could be dying.

You could be one of the Christians that's in the den getting ready to be fed to the lions. Even though our outward man is perishing, the inward man is being renewed day by day, one day at a time. We take life one day at a time and in that day if our inner man is renewed, it's a successful day.

It doesn't matter if everything in the outward life went to pot and if we perished, the inward man is

renewed. That reflects God's glory. That accomplishes God's purpose and there is no greater blessing.

There's no greater place of blessing than to be accomplishing God's purpose. God is so pleased when any one of us manages to do this in a day that he blesses our socks off. It is the most indescribable.

Paul says eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it hasn't even entered into the heart of man. The things that God has prepared for who? For the Romans 828 people, for those who love him, for those that put him first. It surpasses anything you can gain by any measure of effort in this life.

You can be perishing on the outside and you can be in the heavenly realms on the inside. It's our choice. And look at verse 17.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The things that come to us as a result of fulfilling this calling go past this life. They go past the millennial kingdom.

They go clear into the kingdom of the Father which is well over a thousand years in front of us. It's eternal. It never goes away.

Sometimes when I was growing up and there were kids that were more athletic than me and better built or better looking or better dressed or some aspect I thought, well, they're better off than I am. I thought, you know, wouldn't it be great if I could arrange for my own birth and arrange for my own genetic makeup and arrange for things to be a certain way. I'd like to back up and be born with a terrific singing voice or be born with great athletic coordination and so forth.

Well, I can't do that in this life. And at this point, I don't want to. God equipped me with a high speed, low drag, long duration body.

There's a lot of things it can't do, but it can stay up. It can study. My eyes are good.

I'm so grateful that He gave me what He gave me. But back then, I didn't know what I know now. But I will tell you this.

We do have the opportunity right now to determine the eternal status that we experience and that we enjoy, that we can have a big influence over the way things are going to be in the eternal future. And it depends on what we prioritize now. What we do now, what we do in our affliction, it doesn't say in our service, doesn't it? It doesn't say our momentary heavy labor in the service of the Lord.

It doesn't say our evangelism and our outreach and the body count that we bring in a revival is working an exceeding weight of glory, does it? What does it say? It's our suffering. It's our bad times. It's our down days.

It's our awful circumstances. Those are working a far greater and exceeding eternal weight of glory. We don't view it that way.

We say, stop, make it quit, take it away. I'm unhappy. I'm miserable because we don't think about it in terms of its purpose.

And we miss the potential. There is no potential in good circumstances where this is concerned. It's our affliction.

It's our suffering. That's what Paul said right here in Romans 8, isn't it? Remember back in verse 18, I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And there's a great study that could be done in suffering.

But I just want to close this session by moving forward one more step here in verse 28 and 29. Once again, we know something and it makes a difference. We know that all things work together for good.

And I've saved this for last in our review because if you remember anything out of this first session as we go into the second, it's this idea. What is the good? We like to think that this is our good. That because I had a flat in the driveway, I wasn't involved in a wreck.

That because I was rejected for a job and went through this, I wound up getting a better job. And boy, didn't that work together for good. I'm glad now.

I put in a bid on that house and it fell through. I thought I had a signed contract and I didn't and it all fell through. But looky here, now it's turned out even better because I've got a different and better house or a different and better job.

And see how all things work together for good. Now that is a true thing that God does for us. God orchestrates many wonderful blessings into our life.

But that's not what this verse is saying. It doesn't mean it's not true. It just means that's not what this verse is saying.

This verse uses a specific word. It uses the word agathos. And last time, if you weren't here, you have to get it on tape, we talked about the word agathos.

It's an absolute good. It's good that is associated with God. It's sourced in God.

It characterizes God. It belongs to God. And when it says all things work together for good, this is the good.

This is God's ultimate goals and purposes. We have a choice whether or not we will participate in the positive accomplishment of God's purpose. God's purpose is going to be accomplished.

Every single person on the earth that wants to know Christ as Savior will be evangelized. There's no doubt. There's no question.

It doesn't matter what any of the rest of us decide. If none of us are prepared to witness, the rocks themselves will cry out and testify to Jesus Christ. It's our choice whether or not we are ready and willing and equipped to be used by God in those pursuits, in the accomplishment of His purpose.

God is also going to accomplish His purpose through discipline and through judgment, and we might wind up on that side. But for those who love God and those who see themselves as called according to His purpose and live that way, everything in our lives is working together for the accomplishment of God's good purpose, God's ultimate goals, the reflection of His glory. We as a byproduct are going to have wonderful lives, and God will bless us in ways that we can't even begin to imagine or comprehend or appreciate.

But the purpose, the main priority, is the accomplishment of God's purpose. The universe revolves around God, not around us. And when we orient to that rotational pattern, that's when all things work together for good.

We reviewed last time the passages that teach that and talk about God as good. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move into Romans 8.29. Now, this is some of the most walked-on, traveled, post-hold, bulldozed ground in the Word of God, and we're going to move through it in a single evening.

We're going to talk about what it means to foreknow, what it means to predestine, and what it means to be called. And we'll do that all in the space of about 30 or 40 minutes because it's just not that complex. And that'll prepare us to move on through and we're going to see how this fits into Paul's larger argument, what he's talking about in the book.

He doesn't suddenly stop one subject and say, oh, by the way, I think I'll give you a bunch of deep theology about what God thought in eternity past and so forth. All of this ties in to what God is teaching us through Paul's letter about our life. What difference does it make if we are predestined or if we are called or if God foreknew us? Ask yourself the question, in terms of election and calling and all of these things, so what? What's that going to do to me tomorrow? Well, that's the question we'll answer when we come back.

Let's take a break.