

## 25. Learning Why God Works All Things Together for Good

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the liberty that we have in Christ. We have been set free so that we can serve Him in love as we wait for His coming to take us to be with Him in heaven. We saw that at that time we will also be changed so that we no longer have any sinful lusts and desires. Today, we are going to see that God takes the things that happen to us on this earth and turns those things around so that even the things that seem bad are used by the Lord to conform us to the image of Christ.

In Romans 8:26, we read, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” In this verse, we see one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit for all Christians. The word that is translated “weaknesses” means *lack of strength*. In this verse, it means the lack of strength to understand. In this verse, we see that there are many times in our Christian lives when we do not understand how to pray in a particular situation. In this verse, we see that when we lack understanding, the Holy Spirit has that understanding as He prays for us.

Some things that are the will of God are clear and easy to understand. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” In this verse, God makes it clear that it is His will that we give thanks in every situation. In many things we face each day, the will of God is not as clear. Paul experienced this when he had a thorn in the flesh. 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 says, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” In this case, Paul was praying for the thorn in the flesh to be removed. After three times, the Lord made it clear that it was His will for Paul to have the Lord’s strength perfected in his life by this thorn in the flesh. Paul was experiencing weakness because of this thorn in the flesh. In this case, the Holy Spirit prayed that the Lord would give Paul understanding so that the strength of the Lord would be perfected in that weakness.

When we do not know the will of God, we see that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. To “make intercession” means *to speak for us and on our behalf*. In Hebrews 7:25, we read, “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Here, we see that Christ is sitting on the right hand of the Father where He is making intercession for us. Our verse in Romans shows us that the Holy Spirit is also making intercession for us as He prays for us when we do not know how to pray. Since both Christ and the Holy Spirit know the will of God, those prayers that they pray for us will always be according to the will of God.

This is explained more fully in Romans 8:27 where we read, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” As the Father searches our hearts, He already knows what the mind of the Spirit is praying because the Father knows that the Holy Spirit prays for us according to the will of God. As a result, we know that the Holy Spirit takes our prayers and brings those prayers into agreement

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Updated July 2023

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with the will of God. That means that as we walk by faith, we can know God is going to use whatever happens in our lives to work out His will in and through our lives. As we understand this in our own lives, then we will be able to help our children understand this principle in their lives.

Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” It is true that terrible things can happen in the lives of Christians. However, we see that we can know that God takes those terrible things and causes them to work out for good in the life of every person who loves God. Paul understood this in his own life. Philippians 1:12-13 says, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ.” Here, we see that God used the imprisonment of Paul to cause the Gospel to spread among the entire palace guard.

Every Christian has been called by God according to His purpose. Paul was a persecutor of Christians and on his way to Damascus to persecute additional Christians when he was called by God. Galatians 1:15-16 says, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.” God was working in the life of Paul from the moment of his birth. In spite of the fact that Paul persecuted the church for a period of time and even held the coats when Stephen was stoned to death, God was working in his life. God was preparing Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul caused many Christians to suffer before he became a Christian. However, when the Lord sent Ananias to Paul in Damascus, the Lord told Ananias in Acts 9:15-16, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.’” Paul could certainly understand why he suffered for the sake of Christ since he had earlier forced many others to suffer. That is why even when he was in prison he understood fully that God was completing His purpose for Paul's life as we saw when Paul was in prison in Rome.

Many people quote Romans 8:28 without quoting verse 29. The reason that God causes all things to work out for good in our lives is explained in verse 29. Ephesians 1:4-5 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” God knew us and chose us before He ever created the world. At that time, He determined to help us become conformed to the image of Christ. In order to help us develop the attitudes of Christ, we also have to experience suffering so that we can develop those attitudes. Paul explained this to the Christians in Galatia. Acts 14:22 says, “Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’” Paul knew that we all have to go through many tribulations in order to become conformed to the image of Christ.

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However, we see that it is that suffering that helps us to have the relationship that we have with Christ. The last part of Romans 8:29 says, “That He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” That thought is clarified for us in Hebrews 2:10-11 where we read, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Christ made it possible for each of us who become Christians to be with Him in heaven by His sufferings to provide our salvation. Christ willingly experienced that suffering because He was not ashamed to call us His brethren. In fact, one of the first things Christ said after His resurrection is recorded in John 20:17 where we read, “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”’” Immediately after His resurrection, Christ started calling the disciples His brethren.

In addition to determining before the creation of the world to conform us to the image of Christ, we also see that the Father did several things to make that happen. Romans 8:30 says, “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Because God had determined to call us according to His purpose, He also called each one of us. John 6:44 says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We want to help our children understand that the Father was also the one that drew us to Christ because He had called us.

We also see two other things that the Father has done in this verse. Each person who He draws to Christ He also justifies. The word “justified” means *to declare righteous*. At the moment we placed our faith in Christ, we were declared righteous. We were pardoned from our sins and our sins were blotted out. We also had the righteousness of Christ placed on us so that as the Father looks at us He sees the righteousness of Christ. In addition, in the sight of God, He has also glorified us. That means that in His sight it is as if we are already in heaven because we will see by the end of this chapter that no created thing can separate us from the love of Christ.

In these verses, we see why we can help our physical and spiritual children understand why God causes all things that happen in our lives to work out for good. The Lord is using every event that happens in our lives to help us become conformed to the image of Christ. In addition, we want to help our children understand that Christ is not ashamed to call us His brethren. The Lord is allowing all of the things that happen in our lives to help us become like Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn why God causes all things to work together for good.