

***London Justice House of Prayer - Donna Taylor
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Romans 8:28-30

I. Justified and Glorified

A. All Things Work Together for Our Good

In this passage, Romans 8:28, is probably one of the most quoted scriptures in the Bible anytime we are faced with trials and circumstances that happen that cause us to question what is going on and what could be the purpose we need to understand. The Lord is bringing another correction in the way we have been taught all of our lives in what this verse actually means.

28 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. 29 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. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Romans 8:28-30

We are going to look again how the last verse in this passage connects to the first verse. It will actually include what we have studied from verses 17-27. The last two verses we looked at, 8:26-27 helps us to understand why Paul would then begin the next verse with these words, “all things work together for good to those who love God...”

Verse 30, ‘those he justified, he also glorified,’ takes us straight back to ‘as long as we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him,’ in vs. 17, along with verse 21 ‘...when God’s children are glorified.’ Paul continues on here to bring understanding in what we are to suffer with him. It is that place of pain in intercession the Holy Spirit leads us into so that our griefs, sorrows and loves are taken up into the griefs, sorrows and love of God. As we do this, we will then be glorified with Him. For more clarity, look at Romans 8:28 in the RSV.

28 We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 RSV

The verse doesn’t say that ‘all things work together for good to those who love God.’ It means that God is the subject of the main verb: it is God who is ‘working,’ rather than the ‘all things.’ Even in hardship and suffering, even in bitter disappointments, even when wrongly treated, Christians can know that God will work amidst such situations to fulfill His good purpose in His children. Even if situations stay difficult, God guarantees ultimate good results, including the maturing of character to those who are the called.

B. Workers Together With God

This means that God works not just *for* those who love Him, but He works *with* those who love Him. He is affirming what Paul has just referred to in verses 26-27, they are themselves part of what's happening through the spirit's work in them, actively being used in the present time to God's overall working out of his purposes.

The context of this verse depends on the previous verse about the Holy Spirit making intercession for us. Therefore, if we are not partnering with the Spirit in intercession, then all things will not work out together for our good. We are co-workers together with God.

Paul uses the Greek word *synergei*, which literally means “works together.” This is the verb of this verse, but the subject is God, not ‘all things.’ When Paul uses *synergei* elsewhere it means as the Greek implies, two people or agencies *collaborating with* one another on a shared task. (I Corinthians 3:9 and II Corinthians 6:1)

In Biblical Greek, the dative case generally indicates the indirect object of a verb, or the recipient of an action. Also the person to whom, or in whose benefit a deed is conducted or carried out. Here Paul has used the dative case, *tois agaposin ton theon* which tells us who it is that God is co-working with. God is collaborating *with those who love him*. Again, ‘God,’ not ‘all things,’ God works all things for good with those who love him.

Paul is actually saying here that God is *our* collaborator, God works with and through ‘those who love him.’ This has a standard meaning to Israel, looking back at the Shema prayer in Deuteronomy, “Hear O Israel, YHWH our God is One God, and you shall love YHWH your God...” Paul wrote in Romans 5:5 the Messiah's people have had the love of God poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit. For Paul, ‘those who love God,’ includes ‘all Jesus-followers,’ ‘all those who are able to keep the Shema of Deuteronomy 6, to love Him with all our hearts, soul, mind and strength.

Literally, this verse reads ‘we know that *with those who love* God he collaborates for good.’ The phrase refers back directly to what we studied in the previous verse, to those in whose painful prayer the spirit is calling to the father, with the father knowing, understanding and acting. Paul is teaching here the central climax of this letter. The main theme all through this letter has been God, God's righteousness, God's love, and God's gospel. Here, Paul makes it clear God himself is the main subject of this verse.

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. I Corinthians 3:9

1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. II Corinthians 6:1

We see here in these verses, Paul uses the verb *synergei*, stating we are God's fellow workers, as we work together with God. In the first of these verses, Paul is talking about the

apostles being the ones with whom God goes into partnership to get things done. This is about vocation and not salvation. In the second verse here, Paul talks about being ‘ambassadors for the Messiah’ so that God ‘is making his appeal *through* us,’ with the result that in 6:1, we are ‘working together with him.’ This is not about how Paul got saved. It is about how God works with Paul, and how Paul works with God, for the wider work of the gospel.

In Romans 8:18-30, it’s speaking about the vocation of the saved community, the calling to *implem*ent the already *accomplished* work of Jesus the Messiah within and for the benefit of the wider world of all creation.

We saw in the previous verses 26-27, that God goes to work, in this period when all creation is groaning, *through* the spirit-led prayer life, particularly the lament, of God’s people. We are by this formed into the Messiah pattern, the place where the healing love of God, and the pains of the world come together, producing a depth of prayerful groaning where we cannot even speak.

This is what Paul has in mind in verse 28. ‘Those who love God,’ summarizes what’s happening in verse 27. Those in whose hearts the spirit has produced that God-directed groaning, which is heard and known by God, who searches the hearts of all mankind, has become the *place of the triune love of God*. Paul’s point, tying together verses 27 and 28, is that the spirit-led lovers of God are assured that God is at work *with them*, and therefore *through* them.

C. God’s Purpose and Plan for All Believers

What all this means then is that those who love God, the Jesus-followers, are ‘called according to his purpose.’ The gospel-shaped call of God to human beings is not, in this passage, a matter of rescuing them from sin and death, although off course, it has that purpose as well. It is about being *called* for a *purpose*, a purpose that works not just *for* them, but *through* them.

Where in scripture does Paul draw from to teach people being chosen, called, justified, and glorified, the answer is obvious to a first century Jewish reader. It’s found in Isaiah chapters 40-55, and specifically in passages such as Isaiah 45:25. The verses leading up to this phrase, ‘those he justified, he also glorified,’ gives more understanding of who YHWH is.

21 Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior; There is none besides Me...23 I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongues shall take an oath. Isaiah 45:21,23

In these passages, YHWH has made known his own absolute uniqueness and goes further to declare that a time will come when every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him to be Lord.

24 He shall say, “‘Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come and all shall be ashamed Who are incensed against Him. 25 In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified and shall glory.’” Isaiah 45:24-25

YHWH God declares that in him alone are found ‘righteousness and glory.’ This leads up to verse 25, the statement, that from YHWH, and in God, all the seed of Israel ‘shall be justified and shall be glorified.’ Paul is alluding to these passages in Isaiah when he says “God called Israel for a *purpose*; and in the Messiah and by the spirit he has fulfilled and is fulfilling that purpose.

Just like the phrase ‘those who love God,’ as Israel’s designation; and in Isaiah, that Israel is called into being by YHWH for the larger promises already found in the promises to Abraham. Israel is to be the means of bringing God’s rescue operation to humanity and to the whole creation. God’s loving purpose *for* Israel always involved God’s loving purpose *through* Israel.

Paul’s own awareness that the son of God ‘loved me and gave himself for me’ is also fully aware that God had *called* him to be the apostle to the Gentiles; and in fact, the one who would make the Servant-vocation (Messiah calling) of Isaiah 40-55 a reality. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:16-23, describing his purpose from God was to proclaim Him among the Gentiles.

There has been a debate among Jewish scholars that Paul did not change from one religion to another; he was simply called but not converted. Paul himself testifies that he had always worshipped the one God of Israel, and what had changed was not that primary allegiance but his recognition that the crucified and risen Jesus was Israel’s Messiah. Something to consider that while the Damascus road was the moment Paul was saved, Paul also saw it as the moment when he was sent. Both of those things can be true at the same time.

What we can see from the passages we have studied so far, verses 18-27 and what we will see as we go further in verses 32-35, that what we have here in verses 28-30 is the same as what we see in Isaiah 40-55. This is about the call of God’s people to be the ones *through whom* God reveals His glory to the world.

God’s overall purpose when he calls people to believe the gospel and follow Jesus, we as Jesus’ followers, Jew and Gentile alike, was not about us escaping this world and go and live with him somewhere else, which we will go be with him when we die; the call in rescuing them from sin and death, is so God would manifest his glory *through them*.

Not the least through their suffering and prayer. God's purposes is that he calls human beings to share in those purposes, as Genesis 1 always indicated that he would.

At this point in Rome, a city of around a million people, there were probably around 200 Jesus' followers. A tiny minority, but already they were known as trouble-makers, as a dangerous, subversive, disruptive little group. So, Paul's doctrine here of assurance wasn't simply that they would go to heaven when they died, though they will, it was to confirm that they, the Jesus-believing messianic people were in fact the true people of the creator God, *and that God was being glorified and would be glorified through their suffering and prayerful witness, even in the present time*

17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17 NKJ

As Paul stated earlier in this letter to the Romans, those who receive the gift of righteousness is the Greek word, *dikaiosyne*, God's covenant justice, or 'righteousness,' will reign in life. This translation in the NRSV describes what was promised in Genesis 1.

17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17 NRSV

What's being promised here is royal authority - which, of course, as always in the New Testament, means royal authority as *redefined by and around Jesus*. This ruling and reigning doesn't mean we are 'bossing' everyone else around. This is not intended to be by means of military type force. Jesus taught God's kingdom goes forth in the ways set out in the Sermon on the Mount, in peacemaking, in justice-bringing, in mourning over the world's sins, in meekness, purity of heart and so on. That's what 'ruling' looks like now.

From the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' promises that the meek would inherit the earth, that the poor in spirit would inherit God's kingdom on earth as in heaven, meant what they said. Romans 8 is one of the most vivid applications of the same point. *God is working all things for good with and through those who love him, who are called according to his purpose*. Coming into this new understanding of what this verse actually means, open up the possibility of a whole new view of the church's present vocation!

II. Predestined into the Image of Jesus

A. The Overall Plan of God

Paul further defines what God's purposes are for those who become Jesus-followers. In verse 29 he makes a profound statement that God *knew* in advance, that is, he 'foreknew'

the people he was going to shape so he could work through them in this way. This is a prophetic calling just as it was to Jeremiah, 'Before I formed you in the womb I *knew you* and I appointed you to the nations.' Paul alludes to that in Galatians 1 when describing his own 'call.' We find in other scriptures in Amos and Hosea and elsewhere, where God says, He had 'known' Israel from of old. When Paul uses the verb *prohorisen*, translated here as 'predestined,' it literally means 'marked out in advance,' referring to God sketching, ahead of time, how his purposes were to be worked out.

This is not about 'predestination to salvation,' actually it's the opposite. Paul is speaking, as Isaiah was speaking, of God's purposes to reveal his name and glory to the whole world. He uses similar language in Ephesians 1:3-14, the purpose being that God's glory would be displayed before the world, as here in verse 29.

29 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. Romans 8:29

The Messiah's people are to display before the world the truth *which is Jesus himself*. They are, we are, to be 'conformed to the image of his son,' or as can be translated, from the Greek words in this text, *symmorphous tes eikonos*, 'shaped according to the model' of his son.

4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. 6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 4:4-6

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:15-20

We find in II Corinthians 4:4-6, Paul writes that the gospel message he is preaching of Jesus as the Son of God sent into the world by God, is only veiled to those who are perishing, being blinded by the god of this world, lest they should see the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ Jesus. He writes in Colossians 1:15-20 as he declares Jesus to be the Son of God, He is the head of the church and He is over all principalities and powers whether thrones or dominions. The death of Jesus restored the harmony and fellowship that once existed between God and His creation. The point Paul is making in the statement, the 'sending of the son' in Romans 8:3, implies that of the Davidic Messiahship. Now the Davidic promises have been made fully accessible as promised in Isaiah 55:3 to all believers.

3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David. Isaiah 55:3

The sure mercies of David defines God's covenant in terms of God's acts of faithfulness to David. Paul has applied this to life in Christ. The spirit has worked in people's hearts through the gospel, so that the unique role we find in scripture for the King is now shared, as foreseen in scripture, with all His people.

Paul says, Jesus is to be the 'firstborn among many brothers, the first of a larger family.' In Exodus 4:22 Israel is God's firstborn. In Psalm 89:27, it's the Messiah who is the firstborn. In Colossians 1:18, it is Jesus Himself, who is the firstborn from the dead. In other words, the spirit is given so that Jesus-believers may become Jesus-lookalikes, sharing his status as the people who inherit the promises.

The people who are doing the 'looking' are the unbelieving world. Jesus, the true human, is ruling the world in glory. His followers, us, are called to be Jesus-reflectors in the world. Paul says in II Corinthians 3:18, we are already being 'changed from glory to glory.' This doesn't mean going to heaven, it means regaining the proper human vocation and calling under God and over the world. A vocation now made possible by the indwelling of the spirit, as the divine presence in the Temple. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, so His glory dwells within us and is to be seen on and through us in the world as we become more and more like Jesus.

Jesus people are to be like Him, to share his sonship, his inheritance, his suffering, his glory. All of this is *already* true of them. This is the basis of their *present vocation*. That is what this whole section of the chapter, verses 12-30, is all about. When we look back over Romans with what we have already studied, the gospel, the cross, the Messiah, the one body in the Messiah, and then the risen Messiah ruling God's world it's amazing to see how Paul has condensed all of that in this powerful phrase in verse 29. *We who believe, we who love God, have been marked out to be shaped according to this pattern, this messianic reality, this glory-revealing family.*

The more the world objects, mocks and threatens, the more it becomes apparent that the message of the gospel of the kingdom is getting through. This brings us to verse 30 in this section.

II. Glorified with Christ

A. Called for a Purpose

The whole chapter 8 beginning with verse 12 and on prove the divine sovereignty that supports Paul's thought in general and Romans in particular. There's no stopping this God. Those who believe, having repented in faith to the 'call' turns out to have been planned by God long ago, and are declared to be 'in the right.'

That does not *simply* mean that our sins are forgiven forever, though they are through our repentance. It means that those Paul is writing to in Rome who are small in number and mostly have been kicked out of their home or town, can be assured that they are the true people of the one creator God. That is, that this God is working his purposes out, that one day at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord. We find this promise in this verse 30 as well.

30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Romans 8:30

We can be encouraged to read this passage that has been difficult to understand, in the light of Isaiah 40-55, and see the language that has commonly been taken to refer to 'predestination to salvation,' from Augustine to Calvin and beyond, instead in terms of the purposes of God *through* his people for the world. 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be *glorified*.'

Paul's doctrines are never simply theories, they are about the living Jesus himself. At his baptism, the father declared him to be the beloved son, the Servant. This was repeated again at the Transfiguration. Jesus was even marked out, although with irony, in Caiaphas's words at the trial, 'the Messiah, the son of the Blessed?' and in the title on the cross where, as King of the Jews, Jesus fulfilled the role for which he came, the eternal son of God called to bring redemption to all who will believe.

He was foreordained from before the foundation of the world. His baptism was the moment of his public *calling*; his resurrection was when God *justified* him, declaring that he really was his son and installed him *gloriously* as world ruler from that day to this.

III. Conclusion

A. Servant-Theology

In this short passage, verses 28-30 it is based on servanthood, or as has been termed, Servant-theology. The focus is on Jesus and then opening up to include all his people. Up to now in this chapter, we have seen the mystery that suffering will not only be what we as God's people have to go through, but it's also how God's purposes will come to be birthed. As we have seen, Paul draws from Isaiah 40-55 as the biblical roots

for this truth. And, at the heart of the present passage, he speaks of being conformed to the image of the son, the representative of God's people, the firstborn of a large family.

Just as Jesus came as the fulfillment of the Servant in Isaiah 40, Paul declares that we as Jesus followers are also called to serve following the example of Jesus in his obedience to only do and say what was spoken to him by Father God. This is the way we are to live out our lives in whatever calling he has designed for each of us.

So, everything Paul says about Jesus' followers in Rome and to us today, whether we sometimes fail and other times succeed in our obedience to the Father, as explained here in Romans 8, we are 'in the Messiah' and there is no condemnation to those who believe.

Because of His great love for us, through the Holy Spirit we are able to love Him back and to love others as He loves. In these verses 28-30, we come to know the unshakeable and unbreakable reality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose love in and for creation and redemption has called us, justified us and glorified us.

As we continue our study, we have the full assurance of the love of God for us and know that nothing can ever separate us from His great love for us.