

Romans 8:28

- God and the Pandemic II -

- God works for the good with those who love him -

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Introduction

- ❖ COVID-19. Pandemic. (Partial) Lock-down. Schools are closed. Travel is limited. Air-traffic was almost halted. Hospitals in some countries are overwhelmed by patients. Some don't even make it to the hospital and die. People in nursing-homes suffer. Businesses are being closed. People lose their jobs. In some countries church services have been banned or are being held with limited attendance. The enemy is unseen, a virus. People wear mouth-masks to prevent spreading the virus. Social distancing is a must. Infected people are being quarantined for fourteen days.
- ❖ The apostle Paul wrote about suffering in Romans 8. Although he primarily focused on suffering under persecution, sharing in the sufferings of Christ, it is possible to take a wider view. In Romans 8:19-22, he wrote about the creation, which is subjected to frustration and decay by God. A pandemic shows this frustration and decay worldwide.
- ❖ How do we react to this worldwide crisis? With fear? Trying to find an answer to the question: "Why"? "What does God want to teach us?" "Does God have a plan?" Perhaps it is better not to look for answers. N.T. Wright wrote: "Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus. It's Not Supposed To."¹ Is it possible to rephrase this title into: "Christianity Offers Some Answers To the Coronavirus, Being Called To Do So." Not answers in a theoretical sense, but in a religious and practical sense. Wright points to Romans 8:26, 27 when he writes: "St. Paul speaks of the

¹ Wright, N., The New Testament in Its World., & Pandemic, G. A. (2020, March 29). Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/>

Holy Spirit ‘groaning’ within us, as we ourselves groan within the pain of the whole creation.” This is only possible when Christians have hope (Rom 8:24, 25) and persevere therein.²

- ❖ The apostle continues (Rom 8:28): “And we know that in **all things** God works for the good **of those** who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Is it possible to apply these words to the present situation? “And we know that in **the COVID-19-crisis** God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Questions abound.
 - How can we know this?
 - How does God work in this crisis?
 - What is “for the good” amid this crisis? Is there any “good”?
 - Why (only) for “those who love him?” What about other people?
- ❖ There is another translation of this well-known verse possible. “And we know that in **all things** God works for the good **with those** who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” When we follow the previous procedure: “And we know that in **the COVID-19-crisis** God works for the good **with those** who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” The meaning of this verse has substantially changed. Instead of beneficiaries of “the good”, Christians are involved in working for “the good.” They are fellow workers with God (1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1). Questions remain. The story of Joseph gives some clues (Gen 50:20).
- ❖ This outline is a sequel to the outline of Romans 8:19-22 but can be used separately.
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Letter to the Romans. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ An overview of the Letter to the Romans. This overview serves also as a summary of its contents.

Greetings and Introduction (Rom 1:1-17)

² See also Wright, N. T. (2020). *God and the pandemic: A Christian reflection on the coronavirus and its aftermath*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Romans 1:1-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Greetings, Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:1-10) B. Plan to visit the Romans and to share the Gospel with them (1:11-17)
The righteousness from God (Rom 1:18-8:39)	
Romans 1:18-3:20	<p>The wrath of God against all unrighteousness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Of this world (1:18-32) B. Of the Jews (2:1-3:8) C. Conclusion: The Jews and the Gentiles are alike are under sin (3:9-20)
Romans 3:21-8:39	<p>The righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. To which the Law and the Prophets testify (3:21-31) B. Abraham was justified by faith (4:1-25) C. Through faith we have been justified and are reconciled with God (5:1-11) <p>The contrasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Death came through Adam, life came through Christ (5:12-21) E. We are dead to sin, and alive in Christ under grace (6:1-14) F. We are slaves not to sin but to righteousness and to God (6:15-23) G. In the mind a slave to God's law, in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin (7:1-25) <p>The children of God:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. The Spirit has set us free from sin. He has made us children and heirs of God (8:1-17) I. As his children, we share in the suffering of Christ, and will share in his glory (8:18-30) J. There is nothing that will separate us from the love of God in Christ (8:31-39)
What about Israel, the chosen people of God? (Rom 9:1-11:36)	

Romans 9:1-11:36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Not all Israelites came to faith in Christ (9:1-29) B. Because they pursued a righteousness by works (9:30-10:21) C. Did God reject Israel? By no means! (11:1-32) D. Glory to God (11:33-36)
Live according to the Gospel (Rom 12:1-15:13)	
Romans 12:1-15:13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Renew your mind (Rom 12:1-21) B. Submit yourself to the authorities (Rom 13:1-7) C. Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 13:8-14) D. Accept each other in Christ (Rom 15:1-15:13)
Purpose, Plans, Greetings (Rom 15:14-16:27)	
Romans 15:14-16:27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Purpose of the letter, his plans to visit Rome and Spain (Rom 15:14-33) B. Greetings to different groups and individuals (Rom 16:1-16) C. Final words and greetings from (Rom 16:16-27)

- ❖ An elaborated overview of Romans 8:17-39.
 - This passage consists of two parts:
 - Romans 8:17-30. The apostle contrasts the present suffering with the future glory of Christ. He concludes this part with an assurance of the Christian hope.
 - Romans 8:31-39. By a series of rhetorical questions, the apostle assures the readers that really nothing, whatever will happen can separate us from the love of Christ (and His glory). These rhetorical questions are used to affirm the point the apostle Paul wants to make strongly.
 - The first part is characterized by words like:
 - Suffering:
 - sufferings (verse 18); weakness (26) – sons/children of God
 - frustration (20); bondage to decay (21) – creation
 - Hope:
 - eager expectation (19); in hope (20); groaning (as in the pains of childbirth) (22) – creation

groan inwardly (23); wait eagerly (23), in this hope we were saved (24) – sons/children of God

groans that words can not express (27) – the Spirit

- Note the groaning of the creation, the sons of God, and the Spirit.
- Salvation and Glory:
liberated (21); brought into the glorious freedom of the sons of God (21); the sons of God to be revealed (19) – creation
redemption of our bodies (23); adoption as sons (23) – sons/children of God

The children of God, co-heirs with Christ

present - suffering	future (promise) - the Christian hope and glory
<p>¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings</p> <p>I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing</p>	<p>¹⁸ in order that we may also share in his glory.</p> <p>with the glory that will be revealed in us.</p>
<i>The creation and the sons of God (verse 19-22)</i>	
<p>¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation</p> <p>²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it,</p> <p>²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.</p>	<p>for the sons of God to be revealed.</p> <p>in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.</p>
<i>We ourselves as the sons of God (verse 23-25)</i>	
<p>²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly</p> <p>²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope we wait for it patiently.</p>	<p>for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.</p> <p>for what we do not yet have,</p>
<i>The Spirit and the sons of God (verse 26-27)</i>	
<p>²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.</p>	

Conclusion and first Assurance (verse 28-30)

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

for the good

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined

to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Second Assurance (verse 31-39) - a series of rhetorical questions

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?	<i>(Nothing!)</i> <i>(Nobody!)</i>
³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?	<i>(Yes, he will!)</i>
³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.	<i>(Nobody!)</i>
³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.	<i>(Nobody!)</i>
³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?	<i>(Nothing!)</i>
³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”	
³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.	
³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.	

Form and structure

❖ Romans 8:28-30. The structure will be given alongside the Greek text.

οἶδαμεν δὲ	And we know

ὅτι (1)	that
τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν □ πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.	in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
ὅτι (2)	(that) For
οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς·	those God (he) foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
οὓς δὲ □ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὓς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὓς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν.	And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

❖ Date of writing

- "Romans was drafted in the winter of 56–57 c.e. or the early spring of 57"³ and was sent from the Corinth or Cenchræa (Rom 16:1, 2) which was in the vicinity of Corinth. The letter was probably carried by Phoebe to the city of Rome.

❖ The City of Rome and the Letter to the Romans.⁴

- "An extensive building program paid by" Emperor Augustus "and his wealthy supporters transformed Rome into a gleaming city of marble that grew to house a million people. Under his loyal son-in-law Agrippa, a new aqueduct was built along with numerous public fountains; temples were restored; public gardens, baths, and theatres were erected; and the city administration was reorganized with fire brigades and police protection; enhanced grain deliveries to Roman citizens were also provided. All of these

³ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 18).

⁴ This paragraph is a summary of Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 47, 48).

improvements served to demonstrate that the golden age of peace and plenty had finally arrived."

- "Of more direct relevance for the situation of Paul's Letter to the Romans were the reigns of Claudius (41–54 c.e.) and Nero (54–68 c.e.)." "Claudius continued the process of urban development with the creation of a new harbour for the grain trade, the improvement of the roads and aqueducts, the reorganization of the court system, and the creation of an imperial bureaucracy consisting of slaves and freedmen/women who administered the affairs of the empire in areas where the emperor had direct control."
- "Nero came to power with the pledge to restore the role of the Senate and the rule of law, and was celebrated for ushering in a golden age." "At the time Romans was written, the Nero administration was providing an exemplary form of government and law enforcement, despite the profligate personal habits of Nero himself—an aggressive bisexual who enjoyed stalking the streets of Rome with his crowd of sycophants demanding sexual services from passersby and 'indulging in brawls and petty thieving.' The combination of Paul's denunciation of immorality (*Rom 1:25-32*) combined with the command to respect governmental agents as the source of law and order (*Rom 13:1-7*) may derive in part from these peculiar circumstances."
- "A crucial element in understanding the situation of Christian congregations in Rome is the crowded urban environment. At the time of Paul's letter, most of the population in Rome lived in the upper levels of 'multistory tenement houses' or in the rears of shops, while the nobility and the wealthy citizens of Rome occupied lower floors of these buildings or in mansions in the better parts of the city."⁵
- "The large Jewish community in Rome had played a major role in the formation of the Christian congregations prior to the time of Paul's letter."⁶
"Julius Caesar granted the right of Jewish communities to follow their own laws, which was confirmed by the Senate in 44 b.c.e. and later by Augustus and Claudius. The 'right to live according to Jewish Laws and Customs' included permission to have meetings for worship and meals together, to organize a communal life, the right not to give bonds on the Sabbath, to have kosher markets, and to send funds to the Jerusalem temple."⁷
"Although there may have been others, there is solid evidence of at least eleven synagogues in Rome; the word συναγωγή (*synagogue*) may refer to congregations rather than buildings."⁸

⁵ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 53).

⁶ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 55).

⁷ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 56).

⁸ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 57).

Text (Greek)

A. Romans 8:28:	B. Romans 8:28. Variant reading, less attested:
❖ οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.	❖ οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ ὁ θεός εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν. ⁹

- ❖ The variant reading has “ὁ θεός”= “God”. This might be an addition by a copyist to make clear who is the subject in this sentence.
- ❖ This passage represents very difficult textual decisions!¹⁰

Translations

- ❖ Compare the following English translations:

Edition	Translation
ERV / ASV	And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even, to them that are called according to his purpose.
ESV	And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
NRSV	We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
NLT / NASB95	And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.
NIV	And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

⁹ Aland, K., Aland, B., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C. M., & Metzger, B. M. (2012; Rom 8:28).

¹⁰ Nestle, E., Nestle, E., Aland, K., & Aland, B., (1993; Rom 8:28).

Edition	Translation
GNT (TEV)	We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.
JB	We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good.

❖ The main differences are:

- all things work together (ERV, ASV, ESV, NRSV) / in all things God works (NIV, GNT) / God causes everything to work together (NLT, NASB95) / God works... and turns everything (JB)
- To them who love God = for those who love God = of those who love God (ERV, ASV, ESV, NRSV, NLT, NASB95, NIV) / with those who love God (GNT, JB).

❖ Newman and Nida comment: "The translation of this verse is made difficult by the fact that a textual problem exists which radically alters the meaning of the text. (See above.)

- There are two or three possibilities.
 - (1) Some manuscripts do not include *God* as a subject of this verse. That means that *all things* (Greek *panta*) may be the subject of the sentence. If that is the case, then the verb must be taken with the meaning 'to work together' and the dative expression given the meaning 'for those who love God.' Thus, the following translation results:
'for we know that all things work together for good for those who love God.'
The TEV, RSV, NEB and JB give this as an alternative possibility; but no modern translation makes this as a first choice.
 - (2) Some manuscripts include *God* as the subject of this verse. In that case, the verb must be taken with the meaning 'work in cooperation with (in order to accomplish something),' and the dative expression must mean 'with those who love God.' Thus, the following translation results:
'We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him.'
Modern translations, except for the NEB and Phillips, follow this rendering.
 - (3) The third understanding of this verse is represented by the NEB. It is possible to follow the Greek text which does not have God as the subject and to assume (based on the previous verses, especially verse 27) that the Holy Spirit is the subject of this sentence. If one accepts this possibility, the following translation results:

“For we know that in all things God’s Spirit works for good with those who love him.”¹¹

- ❖ The second translation is favored in this outline because of the following arguments.
 - “All things” covers a wide range of situations, difficulties, and dangers, which are not specified, except for resistance (who can be against us; 31); charges against (33); condemnation (34); trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword (35; we face death all day long; 36). This is summarized in “suffering” (17, 18). It is hard to understand how famine or nakedness or sword can actively work together for the good.
 - It is easier to understand that God works in these circumstances, “in all things.” See the next argument.
 - “work with” = “**συνεργέω**”: **to engage in cooperative endeavor, work together with, assist, help.**¹² **“We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him.”** Here **πάντα** “all things” is an accusative of specification. (RSV, NRSV: “*in everything God helps (or works for or with) those who love him to obtain what is good.*”¹³ *Work together with, help in work, co-operate with, assist, with dative.*¹⁴ See also Mk 16:20:
 - “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and **the Lord worked with (τοῦ κυρίου συνεργούντος)** them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” See 2 Corinthians 6:1.
 - “We sent Timothy, who is our brother and **God’s fellow worker** in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith” (1Thess 3:2; 1 Cor 3:9).
 - **“for those who love God”** or **“with those who love God.”** When God is at work with those who love God, the sons of God are actively involved to contribute to the good. In the first rendering, the sons of God are the beneficiaries of God’s actions.
 - Who is working, the Spirit of God or God the Father? It doesn’t make a lot of difference, because the Spirit knows the will of God (27). But with respect to predestination (29), the subject is God the Father (Eph 1:4).

¹¹ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1973, p. 165-166).

¹² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 969).

¹³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 969).

¹⁴ Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996, p. 1711).

- Acts 16:6-10 provides an example of the Spirit at work: “having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word.”

Exposition

Verse 17-27 summary

- ❖ See for the detailed outline above.
- ❖ (Rom 8: 17, 18) We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We share in his sufferings (of Christ) and we will also share in his glory. This is a statement of faith.
 - The suffering Paul refers to, is primarily referring to persecution and oppression at the time of writing. He uses words like resistance (who can be against us; 31); charges against (33); condemnation (34); trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword (35; we face death all day long; 36).
 - **suffering = “πάθημα”**: 1. **that which is suffered or endured, suffering, misfortune**¹⁵
 - In contrast to this suffering, Paul ascertains that God will justify (33), and he will graciously give us all things (32). And whatever happens, no one and nothing will separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our savior (38, 39).
 - The glory is the glory of God. Jesus prayed: “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” (Jn 17:24). “It is closely related to the Hebrew sense of כבוד/δόξα as innate weightiness, honor, beauty, fiery presence, splendor, or power.¹⁶
- ❖ (Rom 8:19-22) The creation waits eagerly for the children of God to be revealed (in glory). At that time they will receive the inheritance and the creation itself will be liberated from decay. Paul uses the image of a woman in labor giving birth to a new world.
- ❖ (Rom 8:23-25) In Romans 7:24 Paul exclaimed: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Again, he writes: “we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Because of the Christian hope, we wait patiently for the realization of God’s promises. He children of God already received the firstfruits of the Spirit as a mark (Eph 1:13, 14). He is the Spirit of the sonship. And by him, we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:14, 15). The Spirit also testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.
- ❖ (Rom 8:26-27) “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”

¹⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 747).

¹⁶ Jewett, R., & Kotansky, R. D. (2006, p. 510).

- “weakness” = “ἀσθένεια”: 3. **lack of confidence or feeling of inadequacy, weakness.** Of Paul’s *self-effacement, timidity* (1 Cor 2:3). Also in a sense of *helplessness*. It can also refer to a lack of spiritual insight and a fragile feeling of hope.¹⁷
- ❖ The Spirit of God searches the hearts. He knows the fears, the anxieties, the uncertainties, the questions. The Spirit knows the will of God. He intercedes and prays in accordance with God’s will. By writing this, Paul assures all those who devoted their lives to God, to trust him in all circumstances.
 - The Spirit as the Paraclete, see John 14:16-17.

Verse 28

- ❖ In the previous section, the apostle Paul wrote about the groaning of the creation, the sons of God and the Spirit, while awaiting the revelation of the sons of God, the inheritance and the new creation, which is no longer subject to frustration and decay. In the present time, God is working towards this future.
 - See for the overview and discussion of the different translations above. Preferred translation (GNT / GNB = Good News Translation / Good News Bible):
 - **“We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.”**
- ❖ **“We know”** The apostle includes his companions (Rom 16:21-24) and also his readers. The recipients of the letter have probably a predominantly Jewish background. Therefore he can assume that the readers share these thoughts. This knowledge is based on the Old Testament histories. See below.
- ❖ **“that in all things.”** Although the context speaks about suffering, it is not limited to suffering. See for instance Acts 16:6-10.
- ❖ **“God works for the good.”**
 - Because God himself is good: “Give thanks to the LORD, **for he is good**; his love endures forever” (Ps 106:1. 107:1. 118:1. 136:1; a.o.).
 - Some examples are given in verse 31 to 34. “God is for us.” He will, along with his son, “graciously give us all things.” “It is God who justifies.”
- ❖ **“With those.”** This can also be rendered "for those." Are the sons of God actively involved, or passively, when God is at work for those? Taking the discussion (above) and the illustrations (below) into consideration, "with those" is preferred.

¹⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 142).

- **“God works for the good with those.”** The children of God are practically involved to work for the good, and not passively recipients of the good.
 - **“The good”** is an important theme in the Old Testament: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).
 - To discern the good, it is necessary that: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom 12:2); “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; **cling to what is good**” (Rom 12:9). **“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”** (Rom 12:21). “Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up” (Rom 15:2). “Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but **I want you to be wise about what is good**, and innocent about what is evil” (Rom 16:19).

❖ **“who love him.”** They are the children of God and the sons of God.

- This love has been poured out in the hearts of the believers by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) and it is the response to the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35, 37, 38, 39).
 - See also John 15:9-17.
 - To love God means to trust God and to follow and obey Christ Jesus. This love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23).

❖ **“who have been called according to his purpose.”**

- Paul himself was called (Rom 1:1): “to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.” As were the Romans themselves: “And you also are among those who are **called to belong to Jesus Christ**. To all in Rome who are loved by God and **called to be saints**: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 1:6, 7).
- We are called “to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.”

Illustrations from Scripture

❖ The meaning of this verse can be best illustrated by three Biblical examples.

- (1) The Joseph-story (Genesis 37, 39-50):
 - After their father Jacob had died, Joseph comforted his brothers, who were afraid that he would take revenge, with the following words:

- “Another instance is the story of the persecution precipitated by Saul. It scattered the great congregation at Jerusalem to distant parts, it seemed to be a calamity but served only for the good of the church by planting it in a hundred new places to flourish more than ever.¹⁸

Verse 31-39 Summary

- ❖ (Rom 8:31-35) Paul poses a series of rhetorical questions. He doesn't answer them but expects his readers to give the answers: "nothing" and "nobody" – will separate us from the love of God in Christ.
- ❖ (Rom 8:36) At this point, he is quoting Psalm 44:22. The apostle might have chosen this Psalm because its content reflects the situation at the moment of writing this letter to the Romans.
- ❖ (Rom 8:37-39) Despite these circumstances, Paul affirms that the children of God are more than conquerors and not victims. He concludes this part of the letter with assurances, which tends toward a doxology.

Application

Remark

- ❖ When preaching on this text, it is advisable to use well-known examples from Scripture.

Praise

- ❖ Praise God for his promises (the redemption of our bodies; the inheritance and glory awaiting us). These promises are the ground for the hope of a Christian.
 - He is at work, although our understanding is very limited when a crisis is involved.
 - He is at work for the good.
 - When we look at the final beneficial outcome for ourselves, the strangest, often the most contradictory occurrences seem to have cooperated to produce this unanticipated result. Of course, God's hand was behind this cooperation; the good result is due to him.¹⁹
 - We can love God because he has given his only son.
 - We can trust God because he is faithful to himself.
 - We can pray. And when we don't know what to pray, the Spirit takes it over.

We know

¹⁸ Lenski, R. C. H. (1936, p. 551).

¹⁹ Lenski, R. C. H. (1936, p. 552).

- ❖ From the word of God. It is beneficiary to study also the lives of godly men and women.

God works with those

- ❖ “That in all things.” Be sensitive, when people suffer and are in grieve.
- ❖ “**Work with.**” When this translation is followed, identify the opportunities for the church and for Christians to work with God(!) as fellow-workers for “**the good.**”
 - Explain the Old Testament background of “**the good.**” “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).
 - “**The good.**” The apostle Paul didn’t specify “the good.” Taking the story of Joseph as an example, the good is not limited to the believers or the case of Joseph, his own family.
 - Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Rom 12:2);
“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Rom 12:9);
“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21);
s“I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil” (Rom 16:19).
 - In times of crisis it is important:
 - to love (even your enemies);
 - to be faithful and trustworthy;
 - to persevere;
 - to be wise;
 - to be righteous and merciful;
 - to be practical (see Acts 11:27-30).
- ❖ “**Called.**” remember your calling. This doesn’t mean a special occasion but the fact that God has called us according to his purpose: “to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

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