

There we are. There we are. Okay, you heard me, though, when I said good morning. Because you responded with a good morning. This.

I was walking outside and I said something to someone coming in. I can't remember who it was right now. And they said, yeah, it is going to be a good morning. Look, I see a glimmer of blue. I said, here's the thing about me.

I don't require glimmers of blue to determine whether I'm going to have a good day or not a good day. Usually an unexpected check will do that just fine for me. No, I kind of love a gray overcast day. It gives you an excuse to sort of not do as much and not be as productive as a good sunshiny day makes you want to be. Well, we are working through Romans chapter 8.

If you're visiting with us or joining us for the very first time. Romans is a book in the New Testament towards the end of your Bible. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans. And we are focusing in on Romans chapter 8. And the verse that we're looking at today put me in mind of this moment, because we were standing and looking at the wreckage of an event that we had planned for so long.

The evangelism team had put together with our little startup church out in Nevada, had put together this outreach that we'd planned for months. We had spent money that we didn't have, but we had found a date and a time. We were going to do it. We were going to do it in June. Downtown Reno, beside the river, there's a beautiful little park there with an amphitheater.

Amazing. It's going to be great. Kids are out of school. It's going to be this beautiful outreach. Fun stuff for the kids.

And then the day turned out a little bit like this, where there's some gray skies. Okay, gray skies. It's Reno. Like they say about every place you wait 10 minutes, the weather changes. Well, it did change.

It went from gray to some rain. And we thought, oh, you know what? We can handle a little rain. We're tough. We're tough.

And then it started sleeting. It's June. It's June. It's June. It started sleeting.

Now sleet is just slightly harder and colder rain. And we thought, you know what? We're tough. We're tough. The devil may be against us, but God is for us.

We're going to keep. We're going to keep going. And then the sleet turned to snow. And when it snows in the high desert, it really snows. And within about 20 minutes, we're looking at a wet and turning white downtown park empty of everyone except us.

The band with their instruments are over in the amphitheater with their stuff covered over with blue tarps. The bounce houses are sitting cold and slightly deflated, like all of us were at that moment. The food trucks are slowly sneaking away.

And I was cold and I was tired and there was a little part of me that wanted to cry. I was 39 years old and so I'm not going to cry, but I sort of wanted to. Have you ever been there, guys, where you're too old to cry, but if you could, you would, and you might reserve it for later when no one's around? And someone said, well, all things work out for good. And I am not a violent person, you know that.

And I wasn't going to punch him in the face. I knew I wasn't going to do that. But I have been known to kick people in the rear end and I have been known to trip people if I get the chance. And at that moment I wanted to either kick him or trip him and then say, how about that, buddy? How's God going to work out that for good?

Because there was no good to be seen. Instead, it felt like we'd wasted time and energy and money with nothing to show for it. But my friend was, was referencing a very well known verse that we find in Romans chapter 8. And it goes like this. Romans 8, verse 28.

And this is our memory verse for today. We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. That's, that's our memory verse portion right there. We'll get to more of it in just a bit. But this is, this is the memory verse portion.

And the question then comes, well, what does this mean? That God works all things for good. So today we're going to explore this a little bit and I think we're going to find that that verse holds a deeper promise about God's purpose for us and for our life than maybe what we have previously thought. So I'm going to pray. And if you've not turned To Romans chapter 8, go ahead and do that if you've got your Bibles with you or your scripture app, and we'll dive in.

All right. Heavenly Father, we know that all things work together for good to those that love you and are called according to your purpose. We believe that. How that works, though, is sometimes a question mark in our heads where we see the Circumstances, we see situations and people and things that just aren't yet right the way you want them to be. And we go, how long, Lord, will it be before those things are finished, are completed, are brought around to your perfect will?

And what role do we have in helping bring that to pass? That's our questions today. So Lord, we pray that as we open your word that you would answer, you would encourage, you would challenge us in Jesus name, Amen. Well, the scripture's up there, so let's just stand and

let's just read this scripture together. Romans 8, 28, 30.

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. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And, and those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified.

And that last word is a beautiful word. You can be seated. So, like our little church in Reno, Paul's letter to the Romans is addressed to another startup church. It's made up of Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are traditionally, they understand themselves to be God's chosen people, chosen for a purpose.

And now there's Gentiles in the mix too. And they're chosen for a purpose. But like bringing a new baby into a house with a toddler, sometimes there's a tension who is here first and who gets primacy? Who does God like best? And Paul makes it very clear, listen, in Romans, the book of Romans, he makes it very clear, listen, there's none righteous, no, not one.

But in Christ, both Jew and Gentile have a right standing before God in Christ. In fact, 8:1 was our first memory verse and it went like this. No condemnation. There is no, therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And that in Christ reverences the faith that, that we put in Jesus to say, I accept your invitation to become part of who you are and your plan.

And you trust your life to Jesus. You put your faith in Jesus. And now Paul says, these people who put their faith in Jesus, you and I live according to the Spirit. Now, the Spirit is important because the Spirit is God's gift to us. For those who are in Christ, God's Spirit is what one it certifies our adoption as sons and daughters.

It verifies, says, no, it really happened. And it's a guarantee of what Romans talks about as Our inheritance. And this is an inheritance that is ours because we've been adopted by God. We are now his sons and daughters. And it's an inheritance that we share with Jesus.

Now, what is his is ours as well. We share in that inheritance. What is his inheritance? Well, the scripture talks about a new heaven and a new earth. And this is part and parcel of the inheritance, this new condition that we're going to be placed into for a purpose, because we rule as well in this new place.

We have authority and we rediscover what God originally intended there in the garden for mankind to be. So we talked about this new heaven and this new earth and how creation currently is groaning. But groaning as in pain. Yes, because it can be pretty hard. But also

groaning as we think about birth pains.

Groaning. And I demonstrated what that sounded like. And I'm not ever going to do that again. So this idea, as Alan talked about last week, we groan, but we groan with hope because we're receiving an inheritance first. Peter says that can never perish, spoil or fade, and it's going to end in this place where we are glorified so that we can share in his glory and it will be glorious.

But verse 17 in Romans 8 says if we share in his inheritance, we also share in his sufferings. And it's all been roses and unicorns up till this point in time. And then Paul throws in this. This idea of suffering. So what does it mean?

And why is it important that we share in the sufferings of Jesus? Because suffering ties our purpose to his purpose. And we talked about this where Jesus entered into the world and he asked us to do the same thing. Jesus didn't recoil or isolate or segregate or distance himself from the groanings of the world, from the problems and the challenges of this world. And neither do we.

We move into the world just as Jesus did. And when Jesus moved into the world, he found a lot. You can probably think of some. We just talked about, about leprosy in the hallway. It's not going to come up again.

But he saw disease, he saw suffering, he saw oppression, he encountered hopelessness. And if you are also engaged in the world, you don't have to go far before you too bump up against the same sorts of things. Just this week, a DCS caseworker told me about a little boy named Aiden. Aiden is nine years old and he has seen and experienced stuff that many of us cannot imagine. Aiden was removed from his home several years ago, and he's been placed with two adoptive families.

And each One decided at the last minute to back out of the adoption. The last one left him alone in the hospital and never came to pick him up, just left him there. This kid has behavioral issues. No wonder he's only known disruption. He's only known disappointment, distress and abandonment.

And each time he sees his caseworker, he says, when am I going to be adopted?

Aiden's heart is groaning for things to be made right. And my heart groans alongside Aidan's for things to be made right.

Diane told me this week about a young man whose dad died last year. And this young man is living alone in his. In his world, in this ramshackle trailer that's just fallen down, windows broken out of it, out in the middle of nowhere with his two dogs company. And I'm honest

with myself, so I know that this young man, his name is Michael, is most likely turning to the only comfort that he knows right now. And it's probably drugs and he doesn't know how to accept help.

But Michael is groaning and Diane's heart is groaning along with him. Last week, Ryan came in and his heart was groaning over this young man, friend of his kids, who was struggling with basic necessities of getting the right size clothes and weather appropriate clothes. And his heart groaned, said, what? What can we do? It's very possible that this morning you too are groaning about a situation, a person, a circumstance that only God really can fix.

And if you are, Jesus says this, blessed are those who hunger and thirst, who groan for things to be made right.

It says, if you're groaning, if you care about these things, then you're my people. You're joining me in my purpose. You are sharing my sufferings. You say, how am I joining? How am I joining you in this?

He goes, well, you're joining me in prayer. Last week, Alan looked at verses 26 and 27, and here's what this passage says. We do not know what we ought to pray for. And I know Diane was like, what? What do I do?

What? How can I help? I go, I don't really know. I don't know. I can only observe from the outside Michael's life.

And I don't know, but God does. So we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit does. And the Spirit himself intercedes for us through our wordless groans. Our prayers that are just feel, feel like not enough. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

So The Spirit calls us to pray. The Spirit helps us to pray. And the Spirit takes those prayers that we pray to the Father, who then will answer those prayers in accordance to his perfect and good will. And this is an incredible process, and this is an incredible promise for those of us who hunger and thirst, who. Who groan for things to be made right in the people and the circumstances and the situations that we find ourselves bumping up against as we share in the sufferings of Jesus as we go into the world by the Holy Spirit.

God is working his plan, and he works in and for and through those who love Him. And he does this on behalf of those whom he loves. And John 3:16 makes it clear who. Who he loves. Who does he love?

God so loved the world. God so loved the world. Everyone. Everyone and everything. Remember, creation is groaning too.

Creation is groaning in anticipation of this new heaven and earth. God loves his creation. And so we are here not just for the people, but we're here for the creation. We are tied to his purpose for creation, and he's doing it through us. The rsv, the Revised Standard Version of this scripture, a different translation, but I love how it translated because it makes it.

It makes it clear what may not be so clear. And here's how Romans 8:28 in the revised Standard Version reads. It says, we know that in everything God works for good. See that word right there? What is that word?

With. With those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. And that with is a little Greek word that can be translated several different ways. But one way that I feel like is in accordance with what Paul has been taking us through. This journey through chapter eight makes it.

Makes it clear that we are part of God's plan for making all things good and right and in accordance with his will. So I don't know. I don't know how God is going to work in little Aiden's life who needs a family, a forever family, who will understand that he's got a lot of stuff going on and will just be patient with him and love him and not throw away his toys like one family did.

I don't know how God's going to work in Michael's life, who's living out there and it's getting cold and Diane's heart is groaning about it. And now I've met him, I'm like, Jesus, we got to do something. What do you want us to do? I don't know how God's going to do that, but I know that the first step is to pray to Begin praying. Because in those situations, prayer is what is how the Holy Spirit brings into alignment that situation with God's perfect will.

And I know if you're like me, you pull up outside his house, you hear about Aidan's story and you go, prayer, well that takes a long time. Let me just get a crew together and let's go put some windows in this trailer, let's hook him back up to electricity, let's start knocking on doors and emailing people and sending texts about little Aiden because we can find, surely we can find some family that will take Aiden in. I want to do this. I think most guys want to, I think all of us, really, anyone who's a doer, we want to just, let's just get it done, let's just go do it. But God says, hold on, hold, pause, pause, pause.

The first work of God's people is not to go assemble a crew or recruit for a project. The first task is to pray.

Prayer is the faith part of God's plan. We take it to the father. Lord, you know, you know Aiden, Lord, you know Michael, Lord, you know this high schooler who needs clothes. Lord, you know my situation.

Start working right now, please, in Jesus name. That's the first part. That's the faith. That's the faith part. But the second part is the works part.

And this is the part that I think a lot of us go, yeah, let's get to it. But the works part we have to be careful with because we can't just want to rush in and start trying to fix it our way. But the works part has to follow on prayer because we have to get in the right, we have to get in the place where the Holy Spirit is actually converting our prayers and our desires and our wants and wishes into, and make that into alignment with God's plan. Because the works part is simply following the instructions and directions of Jesus and we have to be in that faith part to know what those directions are. Otherwise we go off on our own place.

Anyone ever done that? Go off on your own plan and realize, yikes, that was a bad idea. So we, as we listen to Jesus, as we follow what he tells us to do, we advocate for the little Aids in the world. We keep checking in on the Michaels of the world. We do what Jesus asked us to do for the sake of rightness, what should be right in the world.

And this process of praying and talking to Jesus and working alongside of him as he works in inside of us ultimately leads us to God's long term plan. For us which is being conformed to the image of Jesus. That's his long term plan for us. That's his pre planned destination for us. That's his pre destination for us.

Becoming like our Savior, our Redeemer. And I love how Paul describes this. The firstborn among brethren, the firstborn among brothers and sisters. We are being conformed to look like our big brother, King Jesus conformed to his image. In the meantime between the groaning and that glory, here's how we approach these situations as we believe and pray that God is working all things together for good to those that love him and are called according to his purpose.

One we take to Jesus all that wearies and burdens, says 1st Peter 5 says, cast all your anxious thoughts, all your concerns on him because he cares for you. We take it to Jesus, we pray about it. The second thing is we live confidently inside the plan and purpose of God. We live confidently knowing that God is doing his work and we get to be part of it. Philippians 4, 6 and 7 says, don't be anxious about anything.

Don't let anxiety, don't let your fear, don't let worrisomeness rule and control your heart and your mind. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And so I can pray about Michael's situation and I can sleep at night and I can advocate for

little Aiden. And I can sleep at night because I'm trusting Jesus with it.

Psalm 46:10 says, Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. Psalm 91 says this because he loves me, says the Lord, I will rescue him, I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He'll call on me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble and I will deliver him and honor him. And with long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.

Ah, what a beautiful destination God has in mind for us. So we live confidently there and then we just participate in God's plan and purpose. This is, this is the, this is the obedience part. This is the following what Jesus tells us to do. In the book of Luke Christmas is coming up, so I thought this might be appropriate.

In the book of Luke, chapter one, Gabriel shows up to a young woman, her name is Mary. And the angel Gabriel lays out this plan that God has for her life. And Mary's response is okay. Okay. Be it unto me according to your word.

In other words, I have confidence in your plan, and I will do whatever you ask me to do so we can live in this confidence. That means as we live and we move and we engage with the world, God is working in us, through us, and around us. Alan loves when I bring that phrase in. But God working in us and through us and around us. This is the essence of why we are here.

And then this is the confidence. Romans 8, 28, 30. We know. Let's say it again. We know that in all things, God works for the good with those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

That miserable day in June. Remember that way back when we started, and it was sleeting and it was this snowing, and then the snow is starting to kind of rest on the top of the grass. You're like, it is June in Nevada. What in the world does God have in mind for this?

I was frustrated with the weather, and I was frustrated with God. And I was tired and I was ready to chuck it all in and move back to Indiana, because at least here the snow shows up when it's supposed to show up.

But many of you have heard this story, because within a few hours, I would hear from God as clearly as I have ever heard from him ever, ever. Like, literally beside me. And what God said was, at some point, you'll be serving at Sherwood Oaks, back home again in Indiana. He didn't sing that song, but he did say that. And there was nothing beyond that.

There was no timeline. There were no additional promises. Just a

simple reminder that God is working out a bigger and more glorious plan. And he's included me in it for whatever his reasons and his purposes. But in the meantime, don't grow weary in doing what I've called you to do right here in Reno, Nevada, because there's a plan for you someplace else.

But you got to be faithful in the plan today. Stay present. Don't grow weary in well doing. And today, this church in Bedford exists in some part because of that horribly disappointing day, that horribly discouraging day, that day where I'm like, God, how in the world are you going to work good out of this? But he did.

But he did. And it's not just me. Remember last week, Ryan understood how God works for good with those who love him. And he brought a need in front of God's people. And prompted by the spirit of God, and according to the riches of his glorious grace, God through his people, amply, amply can I repeat, I will not tell you what this church raised, but I will tell you amply provided for this young man and his mama.

God is good.

And because you guys were faithful and responded to the call of Jesus, this young man and his mom are going to know about the love of Jesus. Now this is a conclusion. When we understand that God has a bigger plan and that we're part of it and that we are partners working together with God for good, then we start to see and experience God's purpose in a grander and eternal way all around us, God working in us, God working through us. And we see God working around us. And then we can look around and remember what Paul said a couple of weeks back.

He said, he says, listen, our present sufferings are nothing compared to our glorious future. God has a beautiful, beautiful destination and he is working all things together for good, for and with and through those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Heavenly Father, today in whatever situation we find ourselves in whatever things that are that are concerning us, whatever things that concern us, the things that we would love to make right. And we probably have some ideas about how you should do that. But today we want to step back and say, Lord, we are content to, to do as you ask and to pray and to pray with our hearts engaged and our minds engaged to pray that your will would be done as your kingdom is built around us so that all things will work together for good and use us, use us in this way.

Open our ears to hear you, our eyes to see the opportunity and the hands that are strong and willing and eager to step and do and be you in whatever situation that we find ourselves in. In Jesus name, amen. We're going to share in time of communion today and again. This is just, this is just a reminder that Jesus loves us and he steps into our world and he looked at your situation and he probably could have

wiped his hands and said, no, no, it's what can God do here? But he didn't.

He left the beautiful gloriousness and sweetness of heaven, the scriptures say, and he became a servant. And he stood, stepped in as God led him and directed him. He was obedient to God's command. He stepped into the world and he and he obedience led him to the cross. He gave his life today.

That's what we remember his sacrifice for us. And I'm going to pray that his sacrifice for us is the encouragement we need to give ourselves to his work now that he puts in front of of us. Heavenly Father, meet us in this moment, Speak to us, encourage us, challenge us, whatever there is that we need to do in terms of a next step for the world around us to make all things good and right according to your perfect will as you include us in that, we want to step into it. In Jesus name, Amen.

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