

## SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation

TITLE: Joy No Matter What

SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:26-30

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

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If you're a Christian, you know that Christianity is supposed to be about joy. You probably even know that you're supposed to experience joy in spite of your circumstances. We know these things, but too often we don't experience the underpinning of joy when we go through bad times. The weakness we feel in times of disappointment and difficulty often robs us of our joy. The apostle Paul tells us the Holy Spirit helps us with the weakness we feel when we suffer (Romans 8:26-27). In fact, weakness is the Spirit's ideal working environment. The specific weakness Paul has in mind is not always knowing how to pray our way through our problems. But we are given the assurance that, when we don't have the words, the Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God. So, the Spirit helps us in the weakness we feel when we suffer by helping us pray according to the will of God.

Then Paul goes on in vv. 28-30 to give us three reasons *why we can have a relentless joy no matter what* our circumstances may be. (Thank you, Tim Keller and Jonathan Edwards!). Keller says your joy will be strong to the degree that you understand and grasp these three things. God promises...

1. Your bad things turn out for good (v.28).

Christians experience all the same things as non-Christians. The promise isn't, "If you love God, you will have more good things than bad things happen to you." ...And, the promise isn't, "If you love God, then bad things are really good things." (cf John 11) —NO—The promise is that God takes bad things, and he works them for good over the course of your whole life. What does that mean? The promise is, if you love God, he will make sure all things work for good, *according to HIS good and loving purpose* for your life. John Newton explains: "Everything is necessary that he sends. Nothing can be necessary that he withholds." God works all things for our highest good.

2. Your good things can never be lost (v.29).

One more point about what the promise is not. The promise is not, when bad things happen, God will turn bad things into good things. We most certainly experience God bringing good things out of bad circumstances. That's the goodness of God, the grace of God, the tender, loving care of God. But that's not what Romans 8:28 is promising. God does not promise you better life circumstances if you love him; he promises you a better life. Jesus did not suffer so you would not suffer, but so when you do suffer, you become like him. The promise is: God takes bad things and he works them for good over the course of your whole life to make you like Jesus—that is your highest good. Or said another way: the "good" of Romans

8:28 is that you are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Verses 29-30 lay out an unbroken chain—the predetermined, will and purpose of God—to *morph* you to the image of Christ. These verses make the point that the good thing God is doing to make you like Jesus is fixed. It's certain—guaranteed. This good can never be lost. Nothing can stop the process God has set in motion. Think—If God is guiding his eternal plan for our *glory*, then he must be guiding our present circumstances for our highest *good*.

### 3. The best is yet to come (v.30).

Verses 18, 21, and 30 all focus on the future glory God has predestined for us. What is glory? Here's how I think of glory. *Glory is...* Every longing fulfilled. Every promise kept. Every question explained. Every problem solved. Every sin forgiven and forgotten. Every tear wiped away. Every struggle overcome. Every wrong righted. Every created thing restored. Every body made new. Every believer present and accounted for. Every good deed rewarded. Every knee bowed. Every affection Christ. Every desire God!!! THAT is our hope. That is our joy. That is our blessed assurance—when, face-to-face, we see that all things really have worked together for good for those who love God and who have been called according to his good, loving purpose.

### *For Discussion —*

When you listen to Bible teaching, you should be listening with an ear to learn, but also with an ear to share with others what you are learning. Keep that in mind as you discuss today's message. How do you need to internalize this message so you can share this Good News with someone God might bring across your path this week who needs to hear it?

Have someone read Romans 8:26-30

1. REVIEW: What have we been learning about how the Christian life is to be lived from Romans 8? List as many as you can, beginning in v.1 going through v.25. How do all the things in this chapter help us understand the Spirit's work in our life?
2. Look at vv.26-27—How have you experienced the Spirit's help in the weakness you feel when you are going through times of sorrow and suffering?
3. How has the Spirit helped you in your prayer life? What does it mean to pray "according to the will of God?"
4. How did your understanding of Romans 8:28 change after hearing this message?
5. What is the "good" that God works out of the bad circumstances of our lives?
6. How do vv. 29 and 30 give us confident assurance that God will keep his promises to us?
7. What does it mean that God "predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ?" How is that different than you may have previously understood "predestination?"
8. How does future glory help us have hope, joy, and confident assurance in the midst of present suffering?

OR try this approach...

Have someone read 8:26-30, then ask: From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here--*What are some of the "AHAs" you took away from what you learned?* When someone volunteers an "AHA"...ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, *"Anyone else have this same "AHA"--what do you think about this insight?"* After you've exhausted topic. ...Throw the original question back out to the group--*"Who else had an "AHA?"* Repeat the pattern above. Follow up questions then get input from the group. ... If someone says, *"I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand ...."* Then go that direction. ...Ask follow up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue then ask the group for input. *"Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?" ..."**So, how would you answer that question?"* Whoever answers--ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc. It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations.