

### **Romans 8:26-30 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

<sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

<sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

<sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The test of your faith will come when nothing makes sense. You'll do right things with wrong results. What you thought you knew with certainty will have a shadow of doubt.

It's as if Providence has thrown you a curve. It's not that you lose your faith, but you realize that you don't have a clue to what the LORD is doing in your life.

The best that you can come up with is that somehow everything is going to work out okay because that's the way it's supposed to be.

Romans 8:28 is one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament. It gives you something to hang onto when your faith is being put to the test.

Somehow, someday, the LORD is going to make sense of all that's gone wrong, if not now, then later. In some cases, much later.

On this Palm Sunday, we look at Romans 8:28 in light of the passion of JESUS Christ. Everything that took place in the life and ministry of JESUS was leading up to this week.

As the events of the week progressed, JESUS walked by faith, not by sight. Humanly speaking, not a lot made sense. An enthusiastic crowd cheered him on Sunday. By Friday they were calling for his crucifixion.

But there was something larger going on than what could be seen with the eyes of men. That's the message that needs to hit home this morning.

There's always something more going on than what you can physically see with your eyes.

The God that we worship is so immense that He controls every aspect of His creation in time, space and eternity.

At the same time, He is so close and intimate with each one of His elect, that every detail is arranged so that it works for their good.

Do you believe that? If everything is going fine in your life, that's not a huge leap of faith. When nothing is going right, that's a different matter.

Today we'll look at the Knowledge of God; the Promise of God, and the Purpose of God.

The first three words of **Romans 8:28** are "**And we know...**" Whatever we know about God comes to us from revelation. The knowledge of God is what God chooses to reveal to us.

Back in chapter one Paul wrote that the knowledge of God's existence is plain to all of us.

### **Romans 1:19-20 (ESV)**

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.<sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

The knowledge of God's existence has to be suppressed in order to be denied. We have no excuse not to believe.

While that is true, in today's day and age the knowledge of God is viewed more subjectively. "*This is how I see God*" rather than this is how God has revealed Himself.

The knowledge of God is seen as therapeutic, so whatever you think about God is fine as long as you find it helpful.

This is why a movie like *The Shack* is embraced by so many. It presents a portrayal of God without the rough edges of the Bible. Sin, judgment and the need for atonement aren't necessary.

New age philosophy has a very open ended view of the knowledge of God. What we know about God comes out of what we experience. That can change over time.

In today's world, the knowledge of God comes less and less from Divine revelation, and more and more from subjective impressions.

For example, it is assumed by many today that God is a benevolent being who doesn't really care all that much about how we live, as long as we're happy.

- Therefore, if you feel unhappy in your marriage, then you should get out of it.
- If it would make you happy to follow the desires of the flesh, then God understands if you act out of those desires.
- If the thought of God's judgment of sin makes you uncomfortable; or if you don't like predestination, then feel free to replace those doctrines.

Be very careful about what assumptions you have about the knowledge of God. He doesn't have to fit into our box.

What we know about God is given to us in His Word. What we know about God is consistent with His character. The God of the Bible has many attributes.

- He is loving, but He is also holy.
- He is understanding and compassionate, but He is also righteous and just
- He is merciful, but He has and will judge sin.
- He is faithful, and He is also jealous. He will not share His glory with another.

There are those who speak too glibly about the knowledge of God. They seem to have a direct line where they get personal memos from on high. “The LORD told me this....” or “the LORD told me that.”

The knowledge of God is much more profound than that. In philosophy there is a field of study that deals with the nature of knowledge. (epistemology) It deals with questions like:

**EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTIONS**

	What is knowledge?
	How is knowledge acquired?
	What do people know?
	How do we know what we know?
	Is human knowledge trustworthy?
	Can our senses be trusted?
	Difference between opinion, knowledge and wisdom

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We live in a postmodern world that rejects the possibility of objective truth. If everything is relative, then any knowledge that we have is purely a personal opinion or a social construct.

But for the Christian, what “we know” about God is given to us by the self-revealing God of the Bible.

Our knowledge of God is obviously not exhaustive, but what we know we can count on.

**Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV)**

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Biblically speaking, what do we know about the knowledge of God?

1. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.
2. His ways are higher than our ways.
3. Everything God reveals in His Word will be accomplished.

When Romans 8:28 begins with the words “**And we know**” there is an understanding that a sovereign God has all things under His control.

It will not always be evident what God is seeking to do at every given moment. That’s why we trust in **His promises**, which is our second point.

“**And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.**” That’s a promise. God makes His promises through covenants.

A covenant is more than a contract. It’s more than an understanding. A covenant is a relationship. It is a relationship that God establishes with His people and guarantees with His Word.

God makes His promises through covenants. The essence of the covenant is the promise of God to be faithful to His Word.

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)**

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

When JESUS came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, that covenant was very much on His mind.

The crowds shouted “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.” There was a lot of excitement that day. But JESUS knew what was coming.

In Romans 8:28 God promises to work in every situation and through every obstacle towards the greater good.

There are all kinds of implications that come from that; allow me to summarize just three.

- There is nothing outside of God's control.
- God works according to His own timing.
- God is the one who defines what is good.

The classic example is that of Joseph in the Old Testament. It was not good that he was sold into slavery by his brothers or falsely accused by Potiphar's wife which led to his imprisonment. Yet years later Joseph was able to say this to his brothers:

**Genesis 50:20 (ESV)**

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

It will not always be easy to discern why the LORD allows for certain things to take place. For those of you who followed the Josh and Brenda Burns ordeal, the promises of God are just as real, but the greater good is working itself out.

(Josh was unjustly accused and convicted of a crime that every person who has ever known Josh knows that he didn't do)

I remember visiting Josh in prison and talking about Romans 8:28. What good could come out of all of this? Josh couldn't say, but he hung on to the promise.

So it goes with those of you who have been diagnosed with cancer; or those of you who have lost a loved one. You may not see the good, but **you hang onto the promise.**

God promises that He will work through even the most painful setbacks so that they will turn out for our good.

But there is one caveat in Romans 8:28. **“And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good..”**

That’s the rub. What if your love for God isn’t what it ought to be? Will you then miss out on the promise?

When JESUS was asked what is the greatest of all the commandments, you remember His answer. “You shall love the LORD your God with all your hearts, soul, mind and strength.”

Elsewhere JESUS said, “Seek **first** the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

#### **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

**No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.**

Do you love God more than you love the things of this world? It’s hard, because the things of this world are tangible. We can touch them. We can count on them, at least for a while.

How can you love someone that you cannot see? It’s called faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. You have to trust Him to love Him.

#### **2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (ESV)**

**For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.**

The promises of God are eternal. They are working toward an end goal. That goal is the purpose of God.

### **Romans 8:28 (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**.

What is that purpose?

### **Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)**

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

When JESUS came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he heard the praises of men. But that had nothing to do with His glorification.

The glorification of Christ came after He was obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

The purpose of God in every situation is to conform us to the image of His Son. Glorification is the end of our redemption. He calls. He justifies. He glorifies.

Your eternal soul is in the hands of God from start to finish. We love Him because He first loved us. We didn't choose Him, He chose us. It's because of His faithfulness that we will persevere to the end.

**The purpose of God is like the keel that is underneath a sailboat. (blade or fin)**

It's not something that you see when the boat is in the water, but it keeps the boat steady so that it doesn't tip over in the wind.

It is the purpose of God that steadies you when it feels like you're about to flip over and go under. He is conforming you to the image of His Son.

How does that help you today? Through the promises of the Gospel you can know:

- **You are not alone.**



- He will not leave or forsake you
- What he began in you He will carry on to completion.

Palm Sunday is the prelude to holy week. It's a joyful day because on the surface it appears that the people of Jerusalem finally got it right. JESUS ought to be praised and worshipped.

But there was a cross that He had to bear first. On that cross JESUS bore the sin of the world. He bore your sin.

All things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

The purpose of God is that one day we will be in His presence and will love Him perfectly. I am a long way from that place now, but He's not done with me yet.

Can you trust that this same JESUS who went to the cross, will do the same for you?