

Victory Regardless Outline

Romans 8:28

- I. 2024 a new year
 - A. Will your next year be filled with the “stuff” of life or the significance of life?
 - 1. Will you be engulfed in the “trivia” of life or embrace the “treasure” of God’s truth?
 - B. The past and immediate present is knowable but the future is not.
 - 1. God’s timeless truths are knowable and they can propel you through the new year and beyond.
 - 2. The future is not just a bunch of events that happen by chance, our future is in the hands of our creator.

- II. One of the greatest, and most misunderstood verses in the Bible—Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

- A. The treasure from 8:28—the providence of God.
 - 1. The difference between the *sovereignty* and *providence* of God.
 - a. Sovereignty focuses on “God’s right and power to do all that He wills”
 - b. Providence is God’s “purposeful sovereignty”.
 - 2. 8:28 is about God’s providence in all of life.
- B. Context:
 - 1. (8:18) There is suffering in the Christian life, but there is greater hope.
 - 2. (8:23) We live in a broken world—the Christian “groans” in this world.
 - 3. (8:26) The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.
 - a. “Weakness” is singular not plural—we don’t have weaknesses, we ARE weakness!

God is telling us that it is not possible for any man to be at complete rest until he is aware that ALL things are happening according to God's divine plan! His providence!

C. Misunderstanding— if you are a Christian , your circumstances in life will be good.

III. Absolute truths.

A. **ALL things happen to Christians.**

All things happen to those who love God...Terrible things happen to those who love God.

1. What happens to Christians? Romans 8:35-39

B. **It is God who causes “good”.**

1. “Things” can never cause any good.

"Everything will work out in the end" implies that if things haven't worked out, then it's not the end. It's a reminder to have hope and keep pushing forward, even when things are difficult."

Tracy McMillan *I Love You And I'm Leaving You Anyway*

2. *Things* don't and can't work out anything!

3. False thinking of the world—*Things ought to go right.*

C. **Though bad things happen, they work for good.**

1. This is not telling us that if we love God we will have better circumstances. What is “good” is not life's circumstances.

2. This is not telling us to view the bad things that happen as good things.

a. Jesus and the death of Lazarus.

3. When good happens it is God giving them good effects in your life: bad things are used to make the good thing.

4. Through all the “bad” things that happens—God never let's go of His sovereignty/providence.

D. **The promise is a better life not better circumstances:** The “good” is far superior to anything this life can give us.

1. The “good” (8:28-29)

- a. God's "foreknowledge"— God knows all things, past, present and future
- b. Predestined—God doesn't just "know" all things, all things are "fixed" in Him.
- c. Who's predestined?—All true Christians.
- d. What does God do? He *summorphos* us!—changes us into the image of His Son Jesus Christ = the good!
- e. God "adopts" us into His eternal family—the firstborn of many brothers
- f. In Christ we are "glorified"!

Victory Regardless Pastoral Notes

Romans 8:28

We have 358 days left in this year... my how it is going fast!...A few weeks ago I made the decision to take at least the month of January to speak on passages of the Bible that encourage, empower and to help propel us in the victorious Christian life.

The beginning of January has always been a time to begin afresh... a new beginning of a new year with some new goals... a time of hopeful renewal... a new start for a more fulfilling life... even if you reject the idea of resolutions... January cannot help but be a point in the calendar screaming for a new start.

So... I wanted to give us some positive, encouraging wisdom from God's word that we can actually implement into our lives right now for the new year and beyond... timeless truth from the Almighty Himself.

I pulled out my blank calendar for 2024 and as I stared at the days yet to be spoken for... all the days are in the future of course... and the words of James 4 came to my mind... 13 **Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."** 14 **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.**

That's not the optimism I'm talking about!

My fear is... as I looked at that blank calendar was that the year will get **filled with the stuff of life rather than the significance of life**... it is so easy to get **so focused on the trivia of life and miss the treasures of life**...

My first 45 years of life was spent in California... regardless of what you think of California... there are a lot of "treasures" in California... Yosemite Valley... the beautiful oceans and mountains... the weather... and I experienced many of those during those 45 years...

But what surprises us ... when we go back there... we are like tourists... and we are finding all sorts of treasures we missed when we lived there.... We missed them because we were so concerned over the stuff of life that we missed the treasures!... Now we say things like *I can't believe I lived here for 45 years and never saw this!*

I don't want any of us to go through this next year missing the *true* treasure... the truly significant things that God only makes available to us.... because we are so engulfed in the "stuff" of life.

Last January we had no idea what was going to happen during the year... all we can know is what has happened and what is happening right this minute... but the future is unknowable... **what is knowable are some absolute truths from God** that if embraced and implemented into our lives will guarantee a victorious future...

For the future is not just a bunch of events that happen by chance...we are not agents of serendipity... where we are limited to discovery by chance a world that has no design or absolute meaning...no absolute truth...no... we live in a world that was created by a creator...who not only created everything with design... but holds all things together... a world with purpose and meaning...

So I wanted to choose those passages that will help us navigate through this unknowable future coming out victorious in our lives as we navigate through it and even greater... victorious in our eternity.

The problem with so many of these passages is that because of their great truths... certain verses have been pulled out and put on our refrigerators.... Little verses with enormous meanings and promises...they've become our favorite verses...

They ARE great, powerful, true verses from God's word.... They are truly verses worthy of our refrigerators...**these verses are true treasure**...the problem is... we risk missing the essence of the verses when we remove them from their context...the verses that surround them.

The Bible was originally written without chapter and verse numbering... they were added in the 16th century...500 years ago... I'm glad they were... but now we are more likely to look at verses as complete in themselves....

Which often results in either misquoting a verse... misunderstanding a verse... mishandling a verse...so... wanting to bring wonderful encouraging passages that are true treasures in God's word to us... I decided to take the most misquoted... misunderstood, mishandled verses in the Bible... and bring them out and uncover their true meaning... which is even more glorious than the misunderstood meanings.

Last week we looked at one of the most favorite of these verses... Philippians 4:13 **I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me...** this week I want to bring out what is probably an equally favorite verse... a verse of absolutely great truth for us to embrace... Romans 8:28.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

This is true treasure... specifically what is the treasure?... we could call it **The Providence of God**... this is a verse about the **providence** of God in our lives.... Providence is a word that scares people...we won't go into why it scares people this morning... that's not our purpose...

our purpose is to be comforted and encouraged and propelled to victory *because* of God's providence.... Which is the main point the apostle Paul is trying to make in this verse.

What is "providence"... Providence is a big word... I have this book in my Library... a great big book... 711 pages... a fairly new book by John Piper... Called *Providence*... what he did in this book was to trace all the acts of God's providence in the Bible... that should tell us that Providence is a very, very big subject!

People often interchange the word *sovereignty* with *providence*... thinking they mean the same thing... they don't... when we talk of the *sovereignty of God*... **Sovereignty focuses on "God's right and power to do all that He wills"**

It's the idea that "*God does whatever He wants... and HE does.*"... but sovereignty as a word does not in itself express any design or goal to this unlimited power... the word *Providence* does.

The word *providence* is built from the word *provide*... the idea of providing what is needed... or sustaining and governing the world.... Or better all of creation.... I like Piper's definition in the big book of providence:

"Providence is God's purposeful sovereignty... its extent reaches down to the flight of electrons... up to the movements of the galaxies... and into the heart of man...its nature is wise... and just... and good....its goal is the Christ exalting glorification of God through the gladness of a redeemed people in a new world....."

That people are.. I pray you and me... all who are found in Jesus Christ... so this verse... Romans 8:28 is a verse about this amazing providence.... And what the apostle wants us to see is **this providence of God in all of life... in all circumstances.**

He has a purpose...we are a part of it... and His purpose will happen...

The verse begins with a conjunction... "**and**"... a conjunction links what is being said to what came before it...and what comes before it is a description of the Christian in his dilemma in the world...The Christian lives in the same world as the non-Christian... a same reality as the unbeliever.

Verse 18 tells us that there is suffering in the Christians' life... but there is great hope of a better life... there is an ultimate life that will come to fruition when we as believers in Christ will be complete in glory...our great hope is in the future... the new world to come.

When we are as **verses 22- 23** says:

Read verse 22

(23) We ourselves, having the first fruit of the Spirit...even we ourselves groan within ourselves...the world is groaning... it is broken... all creation...and in this world we groan...

we now this world is broken.. there is suffering right?... **we groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting for our adoption as sons** (we'll look at that in a bit)... **the redemption of our body.**

While we are on this earth... we are in weakness... the world is fallen... sin has taken its toll on all of creation... that's why there is disease... disappointment... anxiety and depression... we are weak... but while we are here...as we groan...

Verse 26...the Spirit (the Holy Spirit that dwells in us) **the Spirit also helps us in our weakness...**we are so weak... we are so broken that...**we don't even know how to pray as we should... but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words...**

Do you see the condition?... our condition?... we groan... groaning here is our acknowledgment that we are fallen creatures... Groaning is acknowledgement of the results of the fall... and we are in it... and we are weak...

Interesting... notice in verse 26 weakness is singular not plural?... it's not *weaknesses*... weakness could be translated as infirmity...but its singular... we don't have many weaknesses... WE ARE ALL JUST ONE BIG WEAKNESS!

It is the reality that we are incapable of doing anything for ourselves in this weakness... this is weakness to do anything about our fallen state... Donald Grey Barnhouse said it well... *Weakness forms the perfect framework for the exaltation of the splendor of Divine power...*

Do you see it?... our weakness.... Our spiritual weakness is part of God's providence... **the weaker we are and the weaker we realize we are... the greater God's divine power can be displayed in our lives!**

2 Corinthians 12:9

Paul said this... 9 **And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."** **Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses,** the acknowledgement that we ARE WEAKNESS... **so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**

John is a little more direct... In John 15:5 quoting Jesus he says:

5 I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Translation?... Truly a Christian is.... NOTHING!... another quote from Donald Grey Barnhouse... *it is vital for the Christian to recognize our nothingness...for that recognition is the doorway to accomplishment for the believer.... When I am weak, I am strong..."*

So... through our weakness He can display His power... this is truly an acknowledgement of His providence!

Verse 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints.... According to the will of God...another way to say according to God's ...*providence*.

It is vital for the Christian to understand that God (Trinity) knows every part of our being... (we don't!)...

Hebrews 4:13

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.

He knows all our infirmities (we don't)...He's not surprised by anything we do (We are!)... We have the Holy Spirit in us and He is working in us to do the will of God....this is telling us that *God is telling us...that it is not possible for any man to be at complete rest until he is aware that ALL things are happening according to God's divine plan!*

Are you anxious right now?... depressed?...then most likely you have not embraced the providence of God in your life!

This is the context of Romans 8:28...God has a divine plan for our lives... **and it will happen**.... This is for us to be able to look at the tangled patterns in life and understand it is all a part of His divine plan...we can only get the true meaning from Romans 8:28 if we understand this.... *Otherwise we will think it's all about us!*

What is misunderstood, misquoted or misused about this verse is the idea that **if you become a Christian ... Then your circumstances in life will be good**.... We'll see about that... also it is misused...

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose....

This means...

"Well... it didn't work out.... I didn't get to marry the spouse I wanted... ahh.... But for those who love God... there's a BETTER spouse out there for me!"

How many times did we counsel people with words like that?

" It means... if I love God and if I serve God... I mean really serve Him... give up some time and money and everything...if I do that... I won't have as many bad things happen to me...what do we need to know.... What are some absolute truths in and around this verse?....Let's put as our first heading:

1. ALL things happen to Christians.

The Christian's circumstances are no better than anyone else's... in fact... they could be worse!... we could write our own verse to say something like *All things happen to those who love God...Terrible things happen to those who love God.*

We all know this is true! Right?...We know bad things happen to Christians... why do we fantasize something different... by the way... the Bible and reality do not contradict each other!

In our passage... Romans 8... go down to verse 35... what does it say? **Who will separate us from the love of Christ... the us here are Christians!... Who will separate us from the love of Christ... Will affliction?...or turmoil?...persecution?... famine?...nakedness?, or peril?...or sword?**

Life for the believer doesn't get better in verse 36: **Just as it is written... For your sake we are being put to death all day long, we were counted as sheep to slaughter...**Paul goes on:

38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amongst the triumphant truth in those verses... what they tell us also is that all the stuff that happens to other people WILL HAPPEN TO YOU!... all the stuff that happens to everyone else will happen to the "good" Christian.

It's not if you are a Christian not as many bad things will happen to you... it is not many more good things will happen to you... it's ALL THINGWILL HAPPEN TO YOU!...got it... second heading:

2. It is God that causes the good.

Let's change translations that in this case I think is a better translation... NIV **And we know that in all things, God works for the good, of those who love Him, who have been called.**

A careful reading of this verse can save us misquoting or misunderstanding... notice it says **God causes...works all things together for good...** not *all things work together for good.* You hear that all the time... *all things work themselves out for the best...it will all work out in the long run...*

"Everything will work out in the end. You don't need to know how. You just have to trust that it will."...you hear that right?... do you believe it?

How about this gibberish:

"Everything will work out in the end" implies that if things haven't worked out, then it's not the end. It's a reminder to have hope and keep pushing forward, even when things are difficult.

Tracy McMillan *I Love You And I'm Leaving You Anyway*

But the idea is that THINGS will work themselves out....

TRUTH... WRITE THIS DOWN.. THINGS DON'T AND CAN'T WORK OUT ANYTHING!

Have you ever seen THINGS work themselves out?... Your car?... *just give it some time and your blown engine will work itself into a new engine....* the very nature of things is to fall apart... it's the law of atrophy... SCIENCE!

Atrophy—*In simple terms, it means that uncertainty, randomness, disorder and chaos are naturally occurring events in the universe. In consequence, "things fall apart." Including us.*

Things NEVER work out for the good... *things can't...* only God can.... Anything that is happening in your life that is good is because of God's grace... He's doing it... if good things are happening in a non-Christian's life... it is God's common grace.

Part of the problem is a false thinking about the world... we tend to think that *things ought to go right...* when we go through difficulty we immediately think... *things should not be this way...* SAYS WHO? By what power?... *things ought to go right.....* thinking like that will lead you to anxiety and depression!

Here we get into the deeper meaning.... Heading three:

3. Though bad things happen, they work for good.

Let's get this right... **this verse is NOT telling us that if we love God we will have better circumstances....** That is not what the "good" is here.... we'll get to the "good"... This also is **not** saying that when bad things are happening to you... you need to have PMA... a positive mental attitude and try to look at bad things as being good things.... Do some mental gymnastics...

Start viewing the bad things that happen to you as good things.... **No... they are bad things....** I had this pointed out to me years ago listening to Timothy Keller talk about Jesus at the tomb of Jesus... I used to be a little puzzled with Jesus in that story.

John 11... Lazarus was very sick... his sisters Mary and Martha seek out Jesus for help... **Lord, the one whom you love is sick...** what did Jesus say?... **This sickness is not to end in death... BUT IS FOR THE GLORY OF THE LORD.**

[That there gives us a clue of what "good" means in Romans 8:28]... you know the story... after hearing about Lazarus being sick... Jesus waited TWO MORE DAYS before He went to see Lazarus... He finally gets to the tomb and Lazarus is dead.

Read John 11:32-35

Jesus wept!... Why?... Jesus is God... He had said **this sickness is not to end in death...** He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.... Why didn't He say something like... *They all think this is a really bad thing... I'm going to raise Lazarus from the dead... this is going to be fun!.... This looks like a bad thing.... It's not a bad thing!...this is really a good thing.*

He didn't say that.... **He wept...** why was He weeping?...because the death of Lazarus caused Him pain... Jesus hates death... He hates suffering...He wept because death is a bad thing!... what He is getting ready to make into a *good thing* is really a bad thing!... the death of Lazarus was a bad thing!...

We try to comfort people by telling them that the bad things happening to them are really blessings in disguise... **NO THEY'RE NOT....THEY ARE BAD THINGS!**

When good happens it is God giving them...the bad things good outcomes in your life... they are being used to create something good... but they're **difficult bad things**...

Years ago Randy Alcorn interviewed for a new book a family that had gone through a most horrible tragedy... in 1994, Scott and Janet Willis... a large object fell out of a truck on a Milwaukee freeway in front of the Willis's van... they crashed into it... their gas tank exploded... they had six children.. their children I the van.... All six of those children were killed....

Immediately... people from the church tried to console Scott and Janet for their tremendous loss.... What did they say to them?.... **We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.**

That's not wrong!... God WILL work all that out **for His purpose**... but I think that is a misuse of that verse... the idea is... *its all going to work out!... things look bad now... they WILL get better!. **That is... unless they don't!**.. it's all going to work out and you will be in a better spot....**Unless you're not!***

I always think of the disciples...their life circumstances did improve all that much since they became followers of Jesus... their end wasn't so "good"... Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified upside down...

Andrew ended up in the "**land of the Man-eaters**"... now Russia... said to have been crucified in Greece. Josephus says that James was clubbed and stoned to death.... On and on...*hey guys... all things will work out for the good*.... Not if you're talking circumstances!

Just so you know... Scott and Janet's story truly did turn out for good... Alcorn interviewed Scott and Janet fourteen years after the accident... Janet said *"today I have a far greater understanding of the goodness of God than I did before the accident."*

Scott said: *I have a stronger view of God's sovereignty than I ever did before...*

A stronger view of His goodness and sovereignty with six children dead?! How is that even possible?

Yet... not once did God in all that... let go of His providence... His sovereignty... Can you imagine going through all that WITHOUT A SOVEREIGN GOD?... *they guy that just killed your six kids... well that's it!...accidents happen!...* what can get the Christian through such a tragic loss is knowing that there indeed is a God...a loving God... who's got it all handled!

So the promise here is that God will take these bad things and He will work them for good in the big scope of things... the big picture.... The big picture...another part of the problem is we have a tendency to put a date on when the good should start being realized...

I'm really going through it right now... but in a year... in ten years... in _____ I will look back and say remember all those bad things?... now everything is good.... The picture is bigger than some time frame you have in mind.

Not in an hour... a day... a year... decade... before you die.... *Terrible things are happening to me right now... I'll wait it out... I'll grit my teeth and God will turn all this out... exchanging the bad for the good...* there we go with promised circumstances again!

4. The promise is a better life not better circumstances.

Sounds a little edgy... **isn't a better life due to better circumstances?**.... ahh... now we're seeing something!.... NO IT IS NOT!...remember how we started?... my fear is that this year we might miss the true significant things in life for all the "stuff" of life?|

The "good" is far superior to anything this life can give us... it is far, far superior to better circumstances....let's discover what the "good" truly is... look at verse 29... let's put the two verses together:

Read verses 28 & 29

Most of you know this is a verse that could lead us to many deep discussions... maybe even hot discussions... two hot buttons... **foreknowledge** and **predestined**... Paul did not put those words there to start an argument between Calvinists and Arminians... He put these words there to comfort us...

Foreknowledge and predestined speaks of God's complete sovereignty... His providence... these words are there to show us that no matter what you are going through in life... God knows all about it... and all of it is working out for the ultimate good.

Foreknowledge means God knows all things... past present and future... the idea of knowing reality before it is real... foreknowledge refers to the all-knowing, omniscient nature of God whereby He knows reality before it is real, all things and events before they happen, and all people before they exist.

Nothing in the future is hidden from God's eyes... God sees our lives, our bodies, and our days even before we are conceived... **"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"** (Psalm 139:15–16).

Predestined... Not did God just know all things past present and future... He fixes the future... He works out the future... the future is fixed... Ephesians 1 **having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.**"

We know all things will work together for good because that is God's foreordained plan... we can rest in that... no matter how bleak things are... now look at this... **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son...** Who's the predestined?... those whom He foreknew... all believers in Jesus Christ.

All believers in Christ will through life... through the trials.. through the bad things... will be conformed.... The word is *summorphos*... we get the word metamorphosis... means to change us into a completely different person... we will be made Christ-like.

Conformed to the image of His Son.... THIS IS THE GOOD!

Everything that happens in your life.... EVERYTHING.... Losing your six children... goes into conforming you into the image of Christ... God is moving you right now to become conformed to the image of His Son.....

And this is not all... there is more good.... Notice it says verse 29... **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers.....**

Don't let that part of the verse slide by... In the Roman world, adoption was for a very important purpose... we adopt children because we want children... for many reasons... adoption in Christ's day was usually for legal purposes....

We adopt children... but did you know that in the Roman world at that time... most adoptions were with adults rather than children... When a wealthy man had no heir to his estate... and he wanted it to continue on... he would adopt a male... usually someone he trusted... possibly a slave that had been loyal to him....

He would adopt this man into his family.... But not just into the family... adopted him as the head of the family... when the wealthy man died... the adopted son would get all the wealth... all the property... and he would carry on the name!

Do you see what Paul is saying?..... **We know that for those who love God...**all believer IN Christ... **all things work together for good...** conforming them to the image of His Son **for those who are called according to His purpose...**to become heirs...adopted into the family of God!... inheriting all the benefits of being a child of God!

That's not all the good!...one more....

Read verse 30

Glorified...notice it's in the past tense?.... all of us will be brothers and sisters in Christ... we will be like Him.... and we will NOT **BE** GLORIFIED... we already are! **He also glorified...** it's a done deal!