

## Romans Chapter 8

**Romans 8:28** And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

One of the most well known passages, verse 28 is used in most situations of distress, frustrations, or even teenage heartbreak. Typically, people who think of this verse will, in their circumstance, look for the good in whatever happens. Most of the time, we look at this verse while trying to see what God will do for me.

When we see verses that we know and have memorized in principle (if not word for word), then we really need to step back and re-evaluate the verse to ensure we are handling it appropriately.

In order to review this verse properly, we are going to slow down our pace and look at this verse word by word. The intent is to first draw a solid translation, and then we will understand the verse in this context. Finally, we will see how this concept is used elsewhere in Scripture.

### 1. Translation

The first word is the conjunction “*de*.” Normally it denotes a contrast, but basically it continues the thought. The question is “does it contrast?” The basic theme from the previous section, verses 18-27, is about our anticipation of glory and the groaning of creation, our groaning, and the Spirit’s on our behalf. In the previous verse, we saw that the Holy Spirit makes intercession on behalf of the saints in accordance with the will of God. What we know for sure is that verses 28-39 are about what God is doing.

Next, is the verb “**οἶπα** *oida* (*oy’-dah*)” and it means “we know.” This verb is always in the perfect active. The verb is actually the perfect active of the verb “*eidon*,” which is a word of vision, perceive, look after. There are many linguists who argue about the nature of the word and what came first — is this the 2<sup>nd</sup> aorist of such and such? This is interesting for some but an insomnia cure for others. What is important to understand about this word is that this is non-experiential, not progressive knowledge. This is either ingrained or an obvious conclusion to evidence that has been presented. The verb is in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural perfect indicative. We will look at this word more in the “Contextual Interpretation” portion to follow. For now, we understand that this means “we fully understand.”

Next is the word “**ὅτι** *hoti* (*hah-tee*).” On Wednesday we learned that this can have a high impact on the meaning of a verse. This conjunction either introduces a clause (that) or it explains a reason (because, since, when).

Next in the text is an articular participle. “ὁ ἡο – ἀγαπάω *agapaō*” means the loving ones, the ones who love. This is in the dative (indirect object) — to the ones who love. It is in the present active with another present tense verb (work together), therefore this is translated the ones loving.

Next is “θεός *theos*.” In this verse, it is the accusative noun. This receives the action. God is the recipient of the action, or it is who the action is about.

Next is “παῖς *pas*” which, in this grammatical form, is generally accepted as accusative plural. This takes on the action of the verb. This will play a large part in our understanding of this passage.

“συνεργέω *sunergeō* (*soon-her-geh-oh*)” is a compound word meaning very simply to work in unison. This word always has something (or someone) functioning with something (or someone) else (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:1; James 2:22). In the context, there is something that will be working with something else. This verb is in the 3rd person singular present active indicative.

Next we have a textual criticism. One major manuscript out of the four or five that most scholars rely upon has “*ho theos*” written again in the nominative. It appears that Alexandrian copyists inserted God as the subject to indicate who is doing the working.

“εἰς *eis*” is a preposition that in general indicates movement toward. This is normally translated into or unto.

“ἀγαθός *agathos* (*ah-gah-thahs*)” is compared with another word for good, “καλός *kalos*.” In general, “καλός” means that which is advantageous, excellent, good. “ἀγαθός” indicates a good of the standard that the subject has set. Normally, this is used in a religious setting and refers to the good of God. Biblically, when this word is used, it is proper to state “good of a godly standard.”

\*\*To repeat a previous lesson — God does not hold up to an external standard of good. Some believe that there is a universal good provided as a moral absolute and God functions within the universal definition of good. But the truth is that God is the One who is good; all comparisons of good are compared to the One who is good. Therefore, what we need to understand from this word is that it is not our evaluation of what is good but what it is determined by God and God alone.

The final clause in this verse has another article but it is separated from its noun. Skipping to the last two words of this sentence, we see that with the article is used with an adjective and another participle. What we have is “the” followed by another adjective, “κλητός *klētos* (*khlay-tahs*)” and the participle of “εἶμι *eimi* (*eye-me*).” The adjective “κλητός” is used to identify; it describes those who have responded to the call. Simply, this is “invited, called.”

The participle is “**εἰμί**,” a dative plural masculine present participle. “**εἰμί**,” in this grammatical structure, is not common (Rom 1:7; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 1:1; Gal 4:8; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1). All of these uses are a state of being, either where they are or who they are.

“**κατά** *kata* (*kah-tah*)” is a preposition. Its most basic meaning is down, but it has a wide variety of usage. Here, it is used as a marker of a relation involving similarity of process: “in accordance with; in relation to.”

The final word is purpose. Translated from “**πρόθεσις** *prosthesis* (*prah'-theh-sis*),” the word is a compound word meaning “a laying out,” “set before,” or “that which is laid out.” In the Gospels, this is the bread that is “laid out” in the Temple. From Acts through 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy (8x), it is normally translated purpose. The connotation is pretty clear and is understood as the “plan that is laid out.”

Now that we have all the words defined, let’s put the words together.

“But/And we know that/because He works with all things unto good to the ones loving God to the ones who are called according to the plan that has been laid out.”

## 2. Contextual Interpretation

Now we will review this verse in light of the context with the syntax of this verse in mind.

The first question is whether or not this is in contrast with the previous statement. If we look back to verse 18, we will see a high emphasis on our current state — we are in constant distress, constant frustration, not only us, but we also know that creation is in agony, groaning, for our glory to become reality. We also groan waiting for our flesh to be redeemed in hope. And the Holy Spirit also groans on our behalf...but we know that...

On the other hand, if you look only to verse 27, you see the transition of God’s provision already started. The Holy Spirit knows our heart, knows our thoughts, and makes intercession for us based on the will of God...and we know that He does all this because...

Our analysis of the “*de*” here draws two conclusions. If it is contrasting the previous section then it should be “but...that.” If it continues the thought from verse 27 it should be translated “and...because.”

Here is the beauty of this passage, either one properly focuses on who God is and what He does.

Furthermore, what we just accomplished is to make sure that we do not pull this out of its context. This verse is in response to the previous section and the intended result in our mindset is expressed in this passage as well. When we draw application from this verse, we need to ensure that we do not use this verse outside of its original context.

The emphatic use of “we know” (being first in the sentence) should cause us to take note. Reviewing the use of “**οἶδα**” in the Book of Romans (in this grammatical form - 1<sup>st</sup> person plural perfect indicative) results in five other uses (2:1-3; 3:19-20; 7:14-15; 8:22; 8:26). There are certain truths that are self-evident, known to be true without any argument, and these are undeniable. In verse 28, the overall plan of God is not to torment, punish, or demean believers, but to work for good.

As promised, we need to discuss “*pas*” with intent. This word means all. This word can be universal or it can be particular (Philippians 4:10-13). This verse means that Paul can be either rich or poor through Christ. But it can be universal (Romans 11:36). Normally “*pas*” is used to describe another noun that qualifies it in some way. In our passage, we must ask is this universal or is it qualified in some way, or is the qualification universal.

This can refer to the distresses and the agony and groaning, or it can simply refer back to verses 26-27 in regards to the Spirit helps in our weakness. Or this can be general in scope to draw confidence and comfort for the previous section. The way that this is set up, it appears that this is a universal statement to assist in our understanding of God’s intentions toward the saints.

As we discussed the verb “**συνεργέω** *sunergeō*,” we saw that there are always two parties involved. This, I am persuaded, is easy to see. God works with all things. God does not remove, He does not shelter, He does not prohibit; He works with it. Now notice that “all things” is assumed in our mind to be negative, bad things. What we need to understand from this analysis is that “God works with anything.”

We need to reaffirm our understanding of what “unto good” means. We already saw that God is the definer of good. Can we define good? Can we look at a situation and say it is good? Can we see a result and say it is good? We can identify sin and evil very easily, good may be a little more difficult.

In what way is God working. Most try to put this into a scenario about their current circumstance. You lose a job, don’t worry God has something better. A relationship does not work out, God has someone better. This is both superficial and not the promise. The good is not about the now, it is about the future reality. This is also not about God taking a bad circumstance and making it into a good one. The context is waiting for glory and the eventual glory that will be revealed to us. What this does mean is that no matter what happens, God will see good come out of it. We do not have to see it, and it may not even affect our life now (Hebrews 11:36-40). Do you think that the apostles’ lives were easy, full of earthly benefit and mirth?

God works for good. If God chooses to bless us beyond the eternal weight of glory, that is merely a drop in the pan compared to the ocean of joy and glory we are to receive.

The articular participle is used as an adjective. The “ones loving God” is describing the “we” from “*oida*.” We know...to us, the ones loving God. Notice that this is adjectival, not action based but identifying. A similar construction is used in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:6-10. The ones loving Him are those who have heard and believed His promise. This may be the biggest revelation to some. The fact that God working with “all things” unto good is not based upon what we do but who we are.

Our responsibility as believers is known (grow, love God, love people, trust His promises). After that, no matter what happens on this earth, know that His promise that He will make all things good is true.

### 3. Scriptural Analysis

There are many stories in the historical narrative in the Hebrew Scriptures where we can see God working for good. The most often account used is that of Joseph. His brothers meant evil, but God used their actions to bring about good (Genesis 45:4-8). The good was not to Joseph, although he did benefit. It was to preserve life, to save the nations of Israel and Egypt. This was to preserve the line of the seed and to demonstrate God’s full authority over the Earth (during Joseph’s life and after with the plagues).

But our text is about the future. Revelation 21:1-5; 22:3-5. We need to understand that God has our back. Even when we do not see it, the promises of God carry us through the most difficult times. This verse is not about the now; it is about the will and intentions of God.

Even if I find myself in poverty, persecuted, and alone, I will not question God. I know that He will work with anything to make good. I may not see it, I may not experience it, but I do know it.

### 4. Conclusion and Possible Application

Fortunately, God has purposed how to use this information for us. All we have to do is read Romans 8:31-39.