

The Mt. Zion Church Bible Study

Freedom Series

Lesson 3: Freedom for the Future!



Pastor Ken Patterson, Ph. D.

We Have a Vision to Be Intentionally Learning!

Introduction: My wife and I enjoy watching mysteries and thrillers. One of our favorite shows often quotes Romans 8:28 (at least the first part) each time an event happens and they see things working out positively. This verse is a wonderful affirmation of what is possible for those “who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose” (the part of the verse the show leaves out). Yet, when studied in context, this verse is written as a response to Christians facing difficulty, persecution, and challenge to their faith. Paul writes this chapter to encourage believers to remember that the enemy’s attacks and the pressure they were feeling in general were to be expected. Additionally, he reminds them to be encouraged because what God has in store for us in the future will significantly outweigh the pain and suffering of the present. When he gets to verse 28, he is concluding his argument to remind them of what they should know and live by in the present age.

Key Verse: Romans 8:28

²⁸ 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.

Notice the structure of this sentence. What key words stand out to you that will cause you to be sure of God’s presence in challenging times?

Key Words	Stands out because:
Example: we know	The people Paul was writing to (us) can hear that he accepted and understood the ideas of the verse and were using it for comfort and so can I. To know means with certainty.



“...in all things God works for the good...”

This portion of the verse can be very confusing until you analyze the phrasing specifically. Notice, the phrase says in all things God works...This gives us the assurance that no matter what the circumstance, God has the final say in the outcome of what is happening. This does not mean that at the end of the situation you or I will be happy, rich, promoted, living large, healed, or without strain. This does mean that God defines what is good and His authority over the situation will result in what He wills. The best way to think of this is that no matter what is happening, God is still at work to create the outcome He desires.

In the context of what Paul is saying regarding suffering and challenges this specifically would mean at the end of time. However, this also has a present-day connotation because Paul is also talking about how the Holy Spirit is presently translating our groanings to God (see verses 26-27).

Directions: Spend some time thinking about some of your favorite Bible stories and answer the following question.

- What are some Biblical examples that you can remember which did not appear good, but upon further consideration showed God working in “all things”?

Example of things seemingly bad	God shown to be working for the good
Joseph being sold by his brothers...(Genesis 37:12-36)	Joseph is in place to save his whole family and all of the surrounding region when a famine comes...(Genesis 42) This also sets up the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:13)

- Now, take a few moments to answer the following question so that you can see the move of God.

In what ways have you seen God working for the good in situations in your life?

Example of things seemingly bad	God shown to be working for the good IN MY LIFE
Pastor Ken's example: When I did not get the Director role at my previous job.	Showed me that God had something better for me that I enjoy and have greater impact with the freedom to support my wife in her job!

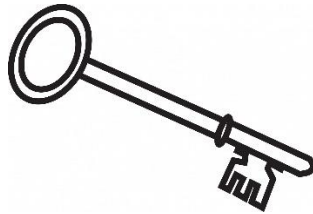
It is important that we spend time reflecting so that we can understand what God has done and what he will do in our lives.

PAUSE!



What have you learned in this lesson so far???

The Key to it all!



...of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.

The latter part of Romans 8:28 may also be confusing because it requires an understanding of Paul’s meaning when he uses certain words such as “love Him” and “called according to His purpose”. These complex ideas can be understood as follows:

Those who love Him (God)...

This refers to more than an emotional feeling towards God. To love God, one must respond to God’s love. John 3: 16 when read properly suggests that our belief in Jesus “should” cause us not to perish. Demons believe in Jesus as the Messiah;

however, they do not submit themselves to serve Jesus nor do they acknowledge him as their Lord. Those who accept Jesus as Lord change the wording of John 3:16 from should not perish to “shall not perish”. It is all in the response.

Here in Romans 8:28 loving God pertains to those who have said “YES” (John 3:16; 1 John 1:9) to Jesus as their Lord. It is not only that God loves us, but we in turn align ourselves with Him. An effective way to think of loving God is to think of the idea of fellowship. We love God, align with Him, come into fellowship with Him.

Called According to His purpose...

Again, Paul’s wording can be confusing if we do not understand the thoughts behind the language. The idea of being called has two basic ideas suggested in the original language. First, it is the idea of an invitation. God has invited all of mankind to LOVE Him. Remember, to love God is to respond to His love by coming into fellowship with Him with Him as Lord. Second, the word implies a relationship and a task (see Romans 1:1, 1:6, and 1:7). The word here always implies called to relationship **AND** to work... Thus, when we read “called according to His purpose,” we can understand that Paul is saying **those who have responded to God’s invitation to be AND do according to the purpose God has designed for our lives.**

Let’s Put It All Together!

Romans 8:28 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.

What it means: We believe, have faith, and know that God is at work in everything that is going on and using it to turn out the way He desires for the ultimate good for those who are in relationship with Him and are doing what they were designed to do in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion: Remember, this verse was written as a concluding thought in a longer argument that Paul was making. The full thought runs from Romans 8:18-31. As you consider Paul's exciting news, remember that he is writing to people who are facing difficulties. His encouraging word remind us to keep on working in God's purpose because He is working to bring everything in alignment with His will for our current good and for our ultimate good!

This is exciting because it lets me know that no matter what is going on, I will win with Christ.

Directions: Take a few moments and jot down what you have learned and why this makes a difference in your walk with Christ!

Closing Prayer: Lord, thank you for always being in charge and giving me victory in my life!