

I. Introduction and review.

II. God is sovereign over all things.

A. God is in charge!

1. How should this verse be translated? Is the subject *All things* or *God*?
2. Either way the meaning is the same. Things do not work together on their own.
3. Everything detail of history is according to God's perfect plan. Eph. 1:11
4. God is sovereign over the choices and acts of all people. Pr. 21:1
5. Nothing can thwart God's sovereign will. Ps. 115:3 Isa. 46:9-11
6. Everything that happens has meaning and purpose.

B. God is sovereign over evil. Isa. 45:6b-7

1. God allows suffering for His purpose. 8:18 Ex. 4:11 Deut. 32:39 Job 2:3,10
2. Even evildoers are under God's sovereign control. Acts 2:23 4:27-28
3. God Himself does not do evil, but He sovereignly works out His purpose through their sinful acts. Gen. 50:20
4. This is hard to understand, but the alternative is harder. Deut. 29:29
5. If Satan, or evildoers, or even we are able to act against God's will, thwarting His purposes, we have no comfort or security.

III. God orchestrates everything for our good.

A. God works all things together in a conspiracy of goodness.

1. God takes events which seem to be random and chaotic, and brings them into perfect harmony with His good purposes.
2. Nothing can do us harm, in the ultimate sense.

B. Paul is not saying:

1. That all things are intrinsically good in and of themselves.
2. That all things are good by our definition of "good". 8:17,18,35
3. That we will immediately understand the good God is doing through suffering.

C. The chief good towards which all things work together is God's purpose, which is that we be conformed to Christ and glorified with Him. 8:18,29

IV. God works all things together for good *only* for His chosen people who love Him

A. The promise of Romans 8:28 is not for everyone! 2:9 Ps. 37:20,38

The unbeliever gains nothing from suffering, unless it leads to his conversion.

B. This promise is exclusively for those who love God.

1. This is emphatic in the Greek text.
2. How can you know you love God? Mt. 22:37
 - a. You desire communion with Him. Ps. 42
 - b. You love the things God loves and hate what God hates. Ps. 119:72,97 69:9
 - c. You love the people God loves. I Jo. 3:14 4:7-8 5:1-2
 - d. You desire to obey Him. John 14:15
 - e. You yearn for Christ's return. II Ti. 4:8
 - f. You love God not just when things seem good, but even while suffering.
3. Those who love God are richly blessed. I Co. 2:9 8:3 Ex. 20:5-6 Dt. 7:90 Neh. 1:5

- C. Those whom God loves have been effectually called by Him. 1:6-7 I John 4:19
1. Paul describes God's people from both the human side and the divine.
 - a. We know we are called of God because we love God. II Pe. 1:10
 - b. We only love God because we are called by God.
 2. We have been irresistibly drawn by God. v. 30 9:11,24 II Ti. 1:9 II Th. 2:13-14
 3. The purpose towards which God has called us cannot be thwarted! v. 29-30 9:11

V. Romans 8:28 applies to the hard cases.

- A. Romans 8:28 needs to be understood in its context.
1. Look ahead to the *future*: Your ultimate hope is the glory to come. 8:18
 2. God is active in the *present*: He has a good purpose in your suffering. 8:28
 3. God has loved you from eternity *past* and He will complete His perfect purpose in your life. v. 29-30. 8:31-39
 4. Ultimately you must submit to His good and sovereign purpose. Isa. 55:8-9 64:8
- B. Examples of God's good work in suffering.
1. You may suffer so that your character will be refined. 5:3-5 I Pe. 1:7 He. 12:6-8 Ps. 119:71,67,75 II Co. 12:6f 1:9 Job. 23:10 Zech. 13:8-9 Deut. 8:15-16 Js. 1:2f
 2. You may suffer so that God's people may be encouraged by your example.
 3. You may suffer in order that others might be saved. Gen. 50:20 Mark 10:45
 4. God may be accomplishing some good thing which you may not yet recognize. Gen. 42:36 46:30 48:15 Acts 8:1,4
 5. You may suffer simply that God might be glorified. Job 1:21 Acts 5:41 Heb. 11
- C. How can God work for our good, in spite of our own sin?
1. You are responsible for your sin and may suffer temporal consequences.
 2. Even then God works for good in his saints. Psalm 32,51 John 21:15f

VI. Concluding applications.

- A. Romans 8:28 should transform your life!
1. Belief in God's absolute sovereignty and goodness is essential to having hope in this dangerous world of suffering.
 2. This truth will enable you to overcome anger and bitterness in relation to other people. You can forgive because God is at work.
 3. This truth will help you to overcome fear, worry, and depression. Mt. 6:25-34
 4. This truth will teach you to give thanks in all things. I Th. 5:18
- B. These promises are only yours if you belong to Christ. 10:9-13

Discussion questions for family worship.

1. How do we know all things work together for our good?
2. What particular things does God control?
3. How can God work through evil things for good? Can you think of examples?
4. What is the good towards which all things work? How do people misunderstand this?
5. For whom does God work all things together for good?
6. How can you know you are called by God?
7. How does the context of Romans 8:28 help us to understand how God can use even our suffering for good?
8. What are some good things God does through our suffering?
Can you think of a personal example?
9. How is God able to use even our sin for good? Does this mean we should sin?
10. How does Romans 8:28 help you to overcome fear, worry, and depression?