

**Series: God Saves #1323**

**Title: Romans 8.28**

***God and All Things***

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Hear now the Word of God as we begin. I am reading Romans chapter 8, verse 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.”** I hope you have been with us as thus far we have talked about three parts to this verse. We began with this opening phrase, “And we know...” And then we moved over to talk about “those who are called.” And for the last couple of weeks we focused on “those who love God.” I admit I dealt with the words of this verse slightly out of order, and I did so on purpose. In my mind anyway, this is the approach we take when we attempt to understand what the Apostle Paul means by what he says.

What this does is to leave us with two more parts. We have this consequential phrase, “God causes all things to work together for good...” and we have “according to His purpose.” I am breaking this well-known verse down into five parts and thus far we have covered the first three. I am also looking at my calendar and I see that tomorrow (here in the United States) is Thanksgiving Day. And then Christmas is next. We have about one month between Thanksgiving and Christmas. So, here is what we are going to do (the Lord willing).

Today and Friday of this week I want to dig in on this: “God causes all things to work together for good...” We will then continue with this next week. Tomorrow there will be a special Thanksgiving Day edition of *God Is*. And in the month of December, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, a special series reflecting on the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what is coming up! I hope you will be with us either on the radio or on the podcast, *or both!* Today and Friday and all next week in Romans 8, verse 28. Tomorrow a Thanksgiving Day edition. And in December a short series in the Bible preparing us to worship Christ at the time of the year when we celebrate His birth.

With these logistics taken care of, let’s get into the Bible. And this reminder: we know that God causes all things to work together for good *to* (notice this promise has a specific audience) to those who love God, to those who are called. I have said it, and I say it again: God does *not* cause all things to work together for good *to* everybody. Absolutely not. God only causes all things to work together for good *to* those who love God, to those who are called. If you love God, that means you have been called to love God by God, and *to you* applies this promise.

Many Christians think the most important words in this phrase are “all things.” My guess is most of you are patiently waiting for me to talk about these “all things.” You think, “That is what I am here for, Swallow! I am dying to know how God causes *all things* to work together for my good!” And, take heart, I will be discussing what are these “all things.” But to me, the most important word here is *God*. G-O-D. God. I urge you to highlight His name and to keep Him front and center throughout our discussion. *God* is the One who is causing all things to work together for our good.

This verse reveals to us again the providence of God. This speaks yet another time in Scripture to the sovereignty of God. He rules and He reigns in our lives and over our lives. For those who love God, who have been called by God, He is our everything! And God works in such a way, His wonders to perform, that He mysteriously pulls together all things in our lives for our good. *God* does this. We do not know exactly *how* He does this. At least, I do not know. But He does! I know *that* He does.

Hear me now, it is what God does with the all things that make them work out for our good. I think we know this, but I want to emphasize it anyway: all things are not good in and of themselves. Of course, the good things are good. And we have so many good things that happen in our lives. God is good! God is so, so good, friends. Hasn’t this been your experience with the Living God? But “all things” also includes the bad things. And these are *not* good. Do not make the mistake of interpreting this verse to mean that “all things” are good in and of themselves.

Our sin is included in the all things, but our sin is evil (as we have just seen with King David). Sin is never good. Cancer or another disease that intrudes upon the body and demolishes our health is included in the all things, but these illnesses are never good. Dissolving a marriage is included in the all things, but divorce is not something to celebrate. Coming to financial ruin is included in the all things, but it should not be considered a positive development in your life and the life of your family. Having an accident that lands you in the hospital is included in the all things, but you are not lying there, your body in traction, thinking about how good it is this happened to you on the road. Death is included in the all things, but death itself is a painful process in which we say goodbye to the people we love the most.

You get the point. It is what God does with the “all things” that make them work out for our good. So the emphasis must be on *God*. When you get to your Bible make sure you highlight “God causes.” God pulls together all of the “all things” in our lives and makes them work together for our good. Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it this way: “God is overruling everything in the whole cosmos for your good (163).” I will repeat this so you can write it down: “God is overruling everything in the whole cosmos for your good.” Isn’t that amazing, Christian?

Even a verse like this one, which seems to put us at the center, really exalts the Lord! We like to emphasize for *our* “good,” but really everything God does is for His glory. He saves and redeems us for His glory. He sanctifies us and perseveres in us, making us holy, for His glory. He intentionally causes things to happen in our lives for His glory. He is constantly driving us to Him. We are busy living our lives, going through our various tasks and responsibilities day to day and night after night, and all the while God neither slumbers nor sleeps and He is actively causing all things to work together for our good, *and* because He is the One doing this we come to realize that while our good is, well good, His glory is better by far.

I am going to draw us back to *God* in this verse. So set it right in your mind now: God is most important here. And then of course, yes, there is the “all things.” And someone may ask, “Is this literally *all* things? I can see how God is using the good things in my life, for my good, but what about the bad things? Is the Bible saying God causes those things to work together for my good also?” And my answer is yes! I take all things to literally be *all* things. There are no exceptions. Lloyd-Jones again, “[Things] that are discouraging, disheartening, dispiriting...bad things, trials, troubles, tribulations, illnesses, accidents, disappointments and failures...” I agree with him. It is all of this.

I am speaking to you now who love God. You love Him and, while not perfectly, you express your love in wilful obedience to His commandments for you. But are you enduring a trial? Are you faced with some tribulation? Possibly even tomorrow, Thanksgiving Day, spent with family is going to be hard, difficult, and challenging for you? Maybe the heartache comes from not having any family and friends and your sorrow is your loneliness. The reality is days like Thanksgiving and Christmas are some of the saddest days for many Christians, because you have a desire to be with people but you will not be.

Alluding to what I said earlier, do you have cancer? Are you sick with some disease? Are you getting a divorce? Have you, personally, come to financial ruin? Maybe you listen now and your accident put *you* in the hospital? Whatever the case may be, are these things part of the all things that God is causing to work together for you, you who love God and are called according to His purpose? Are they included? Yes! Oh, yes they are! And we will talk more about this on Friday.

Let me urge you to be with us again on Friday and all next week in Romans 8, verse 28. Of course, come again tomorrow. Do not miss our time together on Thanksgiving, but for those of you who absolutely must miss, we will pick up here again Friday on God Is.

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