



Message Transcript

The Goodness of God in 2020.. and Beyond

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Let's pray. Father, we love you. And we pray that you were honored and glorified and pleased this morning by our worship thus far through singing those glorious truths about you back to you. Lord, we want to continue worshiping you now by listening to your word, by opening up our hands and our hearts and our minds to receive every good and supernatural thing that you have for us, every truth about Christ and who we are in Christ. And, Lord, I pray for anyone who you brought here this morning in love who may know about Jesus, but they have not turned from their sins. And Jesus received you as Lord and savior I pray today would be their day of salvation. And we do ask this in the name that's above every name. It's the name that sends every demon fleeing, Jesus. Amen and Amen. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to whitewater raft down the Gauley river in West Virginia.

Now, the Gauley river is ranked the second best whitewater in the country and the seventh best whitewater in the whole world. So before they would let us get out onto the Gauley river, the guides did a really smart thing. They sat us down on wooden benches. There was a map on the wall of the river and they showed us where our journey would begin and where our journey would conclude. And then they told us, "Yes, the Gauley river is very exciting, but at times it can be very dangerous." So they walked us through all of the things that we would encounter on that river, all of the rapids, the big rocks, the places of whitewater, because they told us their number one goal was to have us finish safely. And we all did and we celebrated and we all had high fives. It was a great time.

Well, when I look at these five verses that you and I are going to look at in

Romans chapter 8, it reminds me so much of that experience on the Gauley river, because the apostle Paul is going to show us where our journey began. He's going to show us where our journey will gloriously conclude. And then he's going to tell us about what we can expect to encounter all along the way. Now we're in Romans chapter 8, we're going to begin reading at verse 28, the holy spirit through the apostle Paul says, 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, for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son so that he would be the first born among many brethren and these whom he predestined he called and these whom he called he justified.

And these whom he justified, he glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us, he did not spare his own son, but delivered him over for us all. How will he not also with him freely, give us all things. Okay. We have to start off by looking back at 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. We love this verse. We love this verse. We put it on coffee mugs. We put it on calendars. We put it on T-shirts. We love this verse. We love this verse because for one thing, it tells you and I that now that you and I are in Christ, now that we are in Christ, now that we have admitted to God that we're sinners, that there's nothing we can do to clean up our own sin or pay for our own sin.

And we believe that if we die in our sins, they will drag us to eternity in hell. But

we in desperation turn to Christ. We believed in him and we received his free gift of eternal life in heaven and forgiveness of sins. We are now in Christ. For those of us who are in Christ, this verse tells us that our life is not dictated by luck, fate, chance, coincidence or karma. Our life is dictated by the two things mentioned in this verse, the purpose of God and the calling of God in our life. Now that you and I are in Christ, our life is completely under the beautiful, specific sovereignty of our heavenly father. Okay. That was worth coming for it this morning. Just for that. Amen. About 25 years ago, my beautiful wife, Beth and I had the opportunity to plant our first church in a small town in Wisconsin.

And the largest employer in that town was a maximum security prison. And so many of the people who worked as prison guards there came to this church, and many of them were born again. Well, it's interesting, because there was this group of guys who came to our church and they worked third shift at the prison and they were tower guards. So all night long, they sat in the towers and they had phones and they could talk to each other and their supervisors encouraged them to talk to each other to stay awake and to keep alert. But many times their conversations would drift into conspiracy theories. And I mean, they went way down, deep into the rabbit hole, everything from the JFK assassination to the moon landing to the Illuminati was running the world and they were just built upon each other. And so one day I was having coffee with one of these brothers in Christ and I could not believe how fearful he was, that there were secret societies that were running the whole world's banking system and governments system.

And I thought to myself, but brother, you are born again. Why are you worried about bad luck, fate, chance, karma, coincidence or these people. So I prayed and I said, Lord, you got to give me something to give to these guys because they've gone way off track. So the Lord led me to a passage. I'm not going to have you turn there, but I'm going to read it. But if this is you and you've been dabbling in conspiracy theories, you might want to read Isaiah eight versus 11 through 13. I don't want any wives elbowing their husbands right now okay. Isaiah eight versus 11 through 13. Here's the context of this passage. It's about 700 BC and God's people Israel know they're surrounded by all of these enemy nations and they're fearful of these nations because they believe they're conspiring together to conquer them. Well, God is not pleased by the fact his people are fearing the nations.

They're dreading the conspiracies and they're not fearing him. So he gives this word to Isaiah to give to his people. For the Lord, spoke thus to me with a strong hand upon me, he warned me not to walk in the way of this people saying, do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy and do not fear what they fear nor be in dread but the Lord of hosts. Him, shall you honor as holy, let him be your fear and let him be your dread. Now this is not to say that no conspiracies ever exist. We know from God's word that Judas conspired against Jesus, that Absalom conspired against his father King David. Even in the history of our own country, there have been conspiracies that did exist. Sometime read up on the Tuskegee experiments of the forties and fifties and you will see some conspiracies do exist.

But for those of us who are in Christ, Romans 8:28 tells us. Our life is not

dictated by fate, luck, chance, coincidences, karma or conspiracies. That's one of the reasons we love this verse, okay? Church, let's not miss the very first three words of Romans 8:28 because they are so powerful and we know. It's interesting Paul didn't say, and we guess or we conjecture, or we're pretty sure about this Paul says and we know that all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. Why is it so important that you and I are rock solid on those first three words? And we know it's because we have an enemy and second Corinthians 2:11 says we're not unaware of Satan schemes. And one of Satan schemes that he repeats constantly against God's people is to try to get us to doubt God's goodness.

And to doubt God's promises. Think back to Genesis chapter three, everything was perfect in the garden. God was walking in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve. He had given them his words. He had given them his promises. He had given them his perfect commands and then Satan snakes his way into the garden in his first four words to Adam and Eve word, did God really say, you see how he is casting doubt. Did God really say he wanted them to doubt God's goodness. And he wanted them to doubt God's promises. And as you and I go into to 2020, we don't know exactly what's in store for us. Some of us may face unexpected diagnoses from the doctor. Some of us in 2020 may face unexpected deaths in our family. Some of us in 2020 may face unexpected financial turns and Satan is going to be whispering in our ear.

Did God really say all things work together for good? For those who love God and are called according to his purpose and you and I are response to that lie will be,

and we know. We're going to be responding with a word of God, just like Jesus did in battling Satan, the wilderness in Matthew chapter four, did God really say, and we know that all things work together for good, for those who love the Lord and are called according to his purpose. Okay. It keeps getting better. Let's move on to verse 29. For those whom he for knew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son so that he would be the first born among many brethren. Okay. There it is. God's purpose for our life. Did you see it in verse 29? God's purpose for our life that we would be conformed to the image of his son.

We see that Romans 8:28 and 29 are linked together and we should really never separate them. So for every coffee mug that we have Romans 8:28 on, we should turn it and there should be Romans 8:29 on the other side because they're linked together. And we know that all things together for good, for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. What's his purpose. 29 tells us to be conformed into the likeness of his son. Jesus. In fact, look at biblical truth number one in your notes, God is weaving together every event in my life to make me more and more like Jesus, God is weaving together every event in my life to make me more and more like Jesus. Now that word conform is the Greek word Summorphos. Now the only reason I'm throwing a Greek word out there is because I know you'll recognize one of the syllables.

"Sue morph us." The term morph. If you and I have morphing software on our computer, we can scan the picture of one person and we can scan the picture of a totally different person. And we can run those two pictures through the morphing

software. And the picture of this person will slowly but gradually become the face of the other person. Wow, that'll preach. Do you see what God is doing in our life? He's using every event to "sue morph us" into the likeness of Jesus. And the longer we walk with Jesus, we start looking more and more like Jesus, we start talking more and more like Jesus. We start acting more and more like Jesus, we start reacting more and more like Jesus because that's God's purpose in our life. And we know that all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to his purpose to be conformed, summorphos'd into the likeness of his son.

Church, did you notice at the end of verse 29, Paul called Jesus the first born among many brothers. Now, one thing that, that doesn't mean that doesn't mean that Jesus was created. Pastor Jeff just took us through a powerful teaching series on Colossians and we learned in Colossians and elsewhere in the word that Jesus is not a created being. He is the creator of all things. Jesus is God, the son, the second person of the Trinity. And he has eternally existed. A couple things that Jesus is the first born means. First of all, it means that Jesus has the place of preeminence and prominence in God's family. He is the heir to all things. He has the position of first born among many brethren. That means God, the son will inherit from God the father, all things in the universe. And one day, very soon, every knee in the universe will bow to Jesus and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord because he is the first born.

He has the place of preeminence and prominence. Another thing that, that means that Jesus is the first born among many brethren. We know from Colossians 1:18 that Jesus is the first born from the dead. Meaning that Jesus is the first man, whoever

permanently defeated death, sin, Satan, and hell. And he was able to do it because he is the only one uniquely qualified to do it because he's fully man and he's fully God. And now that Jesus is the first born among many brethren, he is offering what he won his victory of the free gift of forgiveness of sins and a home in heaven. So anyone who will admit to God, I'm a sinner. I cannot save myself. I cannot clean myself up. And I believe what your word says if I die in my sin, I'm going to be dragged to an eternity in hell, but I don't want to go to hell.

And I believe Jesus, that you did conquer death, sins, Satan, and hell that you're offering me the free gift of eternal life and forgiveness of sins. And by faith, I receive that gift. Have you done that yet? Your very eternity is at stake. Second Corinthians 6:2 says today is your day of salvation because none of us is guaranteed tomorrow. Okay. Now we see how all encompassing the promise of Romans 8:28 and 29 is that leads us to biblical truth number two. Nothing can come into my life that God has not authored or allowed for my good, nothing can come into my life that God has not authored or allowed for my good. Do you see how opposite this is? That my life is dictated by bad luck, faith, chance, coincidence or karma. No, because I'm in Christ. Nothing can come into my life that my heavenly father has not authored or allowed.

And it's always for his glory and ultimately for my good and my growth in Christ likeness. Now we see some powerful examples of this in scripture. Think back to Job chapter one, Satan has to get God's permission in order to attack God's servant Job, in order to harass God's servant Job, in order to cause great suffering in the life of God's servant Job, he can't just go at Job. He must get God's permission and God

grants it for quite a while. And God ends up getting great glory out of the life and sufferings and trials of Job and Job ends up getting a greater view of God, a greater experience of God in leaning into God. Now fast forward to Luke chapter 22, Jesus tells Peter, Satan has demanded permission to sift you. Satan had to get Jesus permission to come against Peter and at this time, Peter was pretty cocky.

He was pretty self-centered. He was pretty self relying and self assured and Jesus in his perfect sovereignty allows it because he knows that Peter needs to be humbled. If he is going to be an anointed apostle in the church, if he is going to effectively preach the first sermon in the history of the church. But Satan had to get permission from Jesus. Nothing can come into my life that God has not authored or allowed for my good and for his glory. Okay. Churches, we head into 2020. The truth is there are many in this body who are currently in a season of suffering, in a season of deep suffering, in a season of painful suffering. And what your heavenly father wants you to know is you are not suffering because of bad luck, fate, chance, coincidence, or karma. There is a divine and there is a spiritual reason for it. God is doing a beautiful work. In fact, look at biblical truth number three,

Our father is so good to us. He's told us beforehand that trials will come and that he uses them to shape us more and more into the likeness of Jesus. That's how loving our heavenly father is to his children. He tells us beforehand, trials are coming. Seasons of suffering are coming. And I use those to shape you, to prune you, to purify you, to grow you more and more into the likeness of my son, Jesus, because we learned from Romans 8:29 God's ultimate purpose for our life here is to be conformed,

to be Summorphed into the likeness of Jesus. God loves us so much. He's told us that in James chapter one, he's told us that in first Peter one, and he's told us in Romans 5, keep your place church in Romans 8 and flip back a few chapter, chapters to Romans 5. And we'll see what our father says about our suffering. Romans 5, we'll start at verse one,

Verse one, therefore having been justified by faith. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exalt in hope of the glory of God and not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulations. Some translations say sufferings. Why would Paul say we exalt in our tribulations? We exalt in our sufferings. We do our best to avoid sufferings. But we also exalt in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings perseverance, perseverance proven character and proven character hope and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the holy spirit who was given to us. That last verse, verse five is so important. It promises you and I that whatever suffering we go through in this lifetime, whatever trial God leads us through in this lifetime to shape us more into Christ's likeness, we're never alone.

The holy spirit of the living God is always with us and in us, never leaving us, never forsaking us. Now that's not just chicken soup for the soul. That's not just a hallmark card. This is the very anchor on which we will hold onto in seasons of suffering and seasons of trials that we go through and here in Romans 5, our heavenly

father is telling us that at times he uses trials and sufferings to produce in us, Christlike perseverance, Christlike character, and Christlike hope. And it is many times extremely painful, but it is so beautiful what the finished work becomes. I'm old enough to have gone through enough suffering and trials that I start calling seasons of suffering, the beautiful crucible. Because you're in it and God tightens a little bit more to purify some more and he tightens a little bit more to get rid of some of those fleshly things you're holding onto and he tightens it a little bit more.

So all we're depending on is the Lord Jesus. And it is so painful, but it's the beautiful crucible. And he often uses that in our life. And don't forget what second Corinthians 1 tells us. Second Corinthians 1 tells us that our trial will become our testimony. Our trials and suffering will become a ministry of empathy into other people's lives. Second Corinthians 1 says we receive comfort from the God of all comfort in the midst of our suffering. And with that comfort, we will then comfort others who are going through the same type of suffering. Do you know how powerful it is to be ministered to someone who has gone through, what you're going through? It's beautiful to be ministered by somebody who is well-meaning, but they haven't gone through what you're going through. That's the ministry of sympathy. I love you. I hurt for you.

I'm praying for you. That's the ministry of sympathy and that's powerful. But when it's the ministry of empathy, that that person has already walked through this trial that I'm going through. And they're able to say, I know when you walk up, wake up, you probably feel like this don't you. Yes I do. And in the middle of the night, you're woken

up and Satan tries to tempt you this way does yes he does. How do you know? Because I have walked through that same trial and the God of all comfort got me through. And with that same comfort he gave me, I'm going to comfort you. Your trial becomes a testimony and your misery really does become a ministry. Only God can do that. What Satan means for evil God uses for good.

You know, whenever we are in the midst of a trial, we often cry out to the Lord something like this, Lord how much longer, Lord hasn't this been enough to accomplish your work in me. Lord, I can't take this another day. Have you ever been in such a season of pain and suffering? You thought I can't make it another day. I've been there and you know what happened? I woke up the next day and God was there. Lord, I can't make it another week. And you know what happened? I woke up a month later and God was still there. Whenever you and I talk about suffering, we have to talk about God's timing. Why do certain seasons of suffering last short time and certain seasons of suffering last way longer than we would ever think they should. Look at biblical truth number four in your outline, God is so good.

He will never allow a trial to crush us or destroy us. God is so good. He would never allow even the heaviest trial to crush us or destroy us. Prune us, yes. Purify us, yes. Shape us, yes, but he's promised us in his word in this love letter to you and I, that he will never allow a trial to crush us or destroy us. We need to see that. Keep your place from Romans 8 and if you wouldn't flip a couple books to the right to second Corinthians chapter 4, that God's timing is always perfect. Second Corinthians chapter 4,

Second Corinthians 4, we're going to look at the passage versus 7 through 11 and let, let the word of God just unfold and fold over you so we can meditate on it. This beautiful promise of our heavenly father. Second Corinthians 4 versus 7 through 11, but we have this treasure in earth and vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not ourselves. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed. Always caring about in the body, the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body for we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Listen to that last line again so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh. Do you know what I call that summorphos. That the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh that you and I through trials would be more conformed, more shaped, more pruned, more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

It's interesting that one of the word pictures the Bible uses for purifying and strengthening God's people is fire. And for some years, my son, Gabe and I, when he's home from college, one of our favorite shows to watch on the history channel is called Forged in Fire. And in Forged in Fire, it's really a knife making competition. They give these various bladesmiths these hunk of raw steel and they say, okay, you've got three hours to make a knife out of it. So these bladesmiths, the more experienced they are. They know exactly how long to leave that steel in the forge. If they pull it out too

soon, it doesn't really have the tensile strength that it could. If they leave that hunk of steel in the forge too long, it becomes brittle. And as soon as it faces resistance, it will crack and crumble.

God is the perfect bladesmith. His timing is perfect. And when he puts us in suffering, when he allows us to go through a trial, when we feel like we're really in the fire and we say, Lord, how much longer we can trust that the Lord's timing is absolutely perfect. He will not allow us to be crushed. He will not allow us to be destroyed. One of the lessons that God taught Beth and I through the experiences of church planting is that there's never a wasted day with the Lord. And we base this on Psalm 139 that says every one of your days was written in my book before one of them came to be, that means there isn't a wasted day with the Lord.

And we say, Lord, why does this suffering that is so painful for me? So painful for myself, for my family have to go on one more day. What uses it? And God tells us there isn't a wasted day with me. I'm shaping, I'm perfecting you into the likeness of my son, Jesus. Okay. Let's turn back to, Roman's 8, two more awesome promises to stand firm on as we head into 2020 and beyond. Romans 8 will start at verse 30.

And these whom he predestined, he also called and these he called he also justified. And these whom he justified, he also glorified. Okay. If I'm saved, I believe this, that it was God who chose me. And then he called me and then he's the one who justified me. But then Paul says, he glorified me. Now that's strange because the rest of the Bible teaches that you and I are not glorified yet, that you and I will not be fully glorified until we get to heaven and we receive a glorified body just like Jesus is, and it

will be a body without sin and it will be a body without sickness. So why is Paul saying that we have been predestined that we have been called that we have just been justified because that's true. Those are all past tense, but then he says, we've been glorified.

Though it hasn't happened yet. Paul is saying that because he wants you and I to know that it is good as done. If God started that work in us, he will complete it. It's as good as done. In fact, look at truth number five. For the true believer in Jesus Christ, our salvation and eternity in heaven are sealed and secured by the holy spirit in us. It's as good as done. That word, sealed that the book of Ephesians uses about what the holy spirit does in us at the moment we're saved, he saves us, he seals us and he secures us for eternity. That word sealed is a first century word in the middle east when a king made a document or did a work that would be transported somewhere, they would pour wax on it and he would take the King's signet ring and he would press his mark on that document.

And everybody knew that that's the King's work. That's the King's property. And if I touch it, if I open it, if I destroy it, the penalty will be death. So nobody messed with the property of the king because it was sealed with the King's signet ring. Well, you and I belong to a king, it's the king Jesus. And at the very moment he saved as he sealed us with his holy spirit and in the spirit around when demons look at us, when angels look at us, when Satan looks at us, they see that we have been sealed by the king. We are the property of the Lord Jesus, and they could only come against us. If they get permission from our heavenly father and he promises, he would only give

permission if it's for his glory and our good, our growth in Christ like this.

Okay. One more kingdom promise for our everyday life in 2020, look at Romans 8 versus 31 and 32. What then, shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him over for us all. How will he not also with him freely give us all things, Paul is using here what Bible scholars call an argument from the greater to the lesser. Paul really wants to emphasize to you and I how generous and how good our heavenly father is and how much our heavenly father loves to give his children good gifts. So he uses an argument from the greater to the lesser. He points to the cross and he said, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also freely give us all things that we need.

What Paul is saying is our heavenly father is so good. He's so generous to his children. He's already given us the most costly, vital gift his son, Jesus. If he would not hold back that gift, won't he give us every other thing that we need in 2020, but James 4:2 says many times we have not because we ask not. So why don't we make 2020 the year of asking. If he did not withhold his own son, how would he withhold anything else from us that's good for us. Let's make 2020 the year of asking. You know who's really good at asking, little kids. Dad can I have this? Mom can I have that? Dad can I have that? Dad can I have that? Mom give me that. Dad give me that. Kids are so good at asking. It's annoying to us.

But Jesus said that our faith should be childlike. See when we're little kids, we

ask everything because we believe our dad owns everything. He can beat everybody up and he can give me anything. If it's good for me. So little kids ask all the time, they ask all the time, but then little kids grow into junior highers and we get junior high faith like, well my parents aren't that cool. I think I know a little bit better than they do. So you and I need to get back to childlike faith in our heavenly father and make 2020 the year of asking. What kind of gifts will God give if you and I pray for in Jesus name and the Bible says with proper motives, if it is a good gift, we will have it right now. Now we may pray for something that we think we need in Jesus name with proper motives, but it won't be good now.

But if Jesus gives it to us in six months, it will be good. I saw an example of this years ago when my son was really young, we went into a Toys R Us and somebody left a skateboard laying out one of the aisles and he was way too young for that. But as I'm looking at something else, he goes over on the skateboard, gets on it and it slips out from underneath them and he falls and he asks me for a skateboard. Now at that time that would not be a good gift. So I waited a while. Then I bought him a skateboard, actually a long board and he thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a good gift and it brought me joy to see my son enjoying a good gift. So if you and I make 2020 of the year of asking, if we ask in Jesus' name with proper motives, if it's a good gift, our father will give it to us right now.

Let's thank the Lord for doing what we asked him to do at the beginning of his teaching, which was that he would feed us, encourage us, stretch us and fill us with his supernatural word. Father we do the thank you for this morning. We thank you so much

for providing such a beautiful ministry tool as this worship center that we could gather together and worship you in spirit and in truth. Jesus, we love this church because it's your church. You are the head of this church, Lord, and you are knitting us together in the community of faith, through the holy spirit in us and among us. And we can sense that. And we thank you for that. Father we thank you for telling us ahead of time that this life is not going to be easy, that there will be trouble, that you will use trials and suffering in our life for beautiful and divine purposes.

The purpose of shaping us more and more into the lightness of your son, Jesus and Father I specifically want to pray right now for those who came in this morning and they are suffering. Lord, it might be chronic pain. It might be financially, it might be at work, it might be in family relationships, but Lord, they are suffering. I pray that your spirit and your word has greatly encouraged them, that you haven't forgotten them, that you are with them. That their life is not subjected to bad luck, fate, chance, coincidence, karma or conspiracies that their life is completely on your beautiful, specific sovereign plan. And you're doing a beautiful work. Father I pray for anyone who came in here, who does not know you as Lord and savior.

I pray Lord that you will show them their need for you, that they are a sinner and their sins will drag them to an eternity in hell and Father I pray that they would turn to you in desperation and call out Lord save me and you will. You have graciously done that for so many of us here who were trapped in sin and death. You can do that great work because you are the life giving God in Jesus name. Amen.