

“Why?”

Romans 8:26-39

HOW MANY OF YOU ARE PARENTS?

Being a parent means knowing more. It means caring more, and having to say from time to time – “**Just trust me.**”

I remember when I first became a dad. I had the bright idea that I was going to do a few things different than my dad did. I was going to create the perfect family environment where it was always ok for my kids to ask, “WHY?”.

You see, my father did something that, no doubt, many of our father’s did - when he would tell me to do something and I would ask, “*why?*” sometimes, Dad would give me this frustrating answer of: “*Because I am your father, and I said so!*”

Somehow, he thought that was supposed to put my little mind at ease. “*Oh, well dad said so, so it must be good!*”

But I decided that I was going to change all of that and I was going to be the one dad in all of history who never said, “*because I said so*”.

I was always going to answer the “*why?*” with - “*That’s a good question, let me explain*” - assuming that there were always going to be enough hours in the day, or enough comprehension in my child's brain, that my explanation would bring us both to the same conclusion and our family would be perfectly happy.

But I soon realized my brilliant plan had holes in it around the time my first-born child was old enough to utter the word, “*why?*”.

It was then that I recognized, this was not a coherent question, driven by a desire to get all the facts... sometimes, this was a delay tactic; sometimes it was an assertion of her own will over mine. And in those moments, I felt like she was attacking on my parenting!

She was asserting her authority and questioning mine and my wisdom!

Well - as kids get older, “Why?” doesn't go away.

In the teenage years sometimes, it is appropriate to sit down and give them some of your reasoning. To talk things through so that they understand.

BUT YOU KNOW - more often than not, it really comes down to this - Kids, we love you. Before you were ever born, we determined that we were going to do anything and everything in our power to raise you well. One day when we go to be with Jesus, we will leave you an inheritance and all of our earthly possessions will be given to you kids. We have served, saved, and sacrificed to give you a good life.

With that said, understand that I have lived a full life. I have had to make tough decisions, and seen a lot of stuff. I have made some mistakes. Because of that, I have knowledge that you do not have. So, the choices and decisions we make concerning you have a purpose. We are developing things in you— things that I am sure you could care less about now, but will mean the world to you later.

So, is it possible, with that information, for you to trust me? That when I ask you to tell the truth and hold you accountable when you don't; when I tell you to do this or that; when I say "no;" when I tell you to be home at a certain time or go to bed at a certain time; when I say no to social media, or tell you to brush your teeth; or have you do your chores at home before you can go hang out with your friends that there is a reason for it all.

I know you may not see it all now, but **CAN YOU TRUST YOUR DAD?**

Romans 8:26-39 is God having that fatherly conversation with us. He's going to tell us some truth that will absolutely throw a wrench in our theological framework. Everything within us will want to push back against the truth we will be learning today.

So, our Heavenly Father gives us this passage to show us how to handle the truth He's about to give.

We are moving into one of the most difficult concepts for our culture to accept in all of God's Word - the idea of God's Free Will – it's called **the Sovereignty of God**.

The Bible tells that God's thoughts are nothing like our thoughts and His ways are far beyond anything we could ever imagine. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts (**Is 55:8-9**).

What that means is, that God does whatever He wills. And whatever He wills comes to be. Nothing happens outside of His intention and nothing is outside of His control. All things... and everything are filtered through His hands.

Isaiah 14:24 – **"The LORD of Hosts has sworn: 'Surely as I have planned, so it will be; as I have purposed, so it will stand.'"**

Job 23:13 – “He does what He desires.”

Isaiah 46:10 – “Declaring the end *and* the result from the beginning, And from ancient times the things which have not [yet] been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will do all that pleases Me *and* fulfills My purpose,’”

This subject of Sovereignty is difficult because 1) we are limited by our finite understanding, 2) we are not the ones calling the shots.

But if we can be ok with **Genesis 1:1** – “In the beginning God created (*ex-nihilo*) the heavens and the earth” – than we should be ok with everything the Bible says about God, His plan, and the way that He works.

Someone once said concerning the doctrine of the Trinity: *“to try to explain it, you will lose your mind; but if you deny it, you will lose your soul.”*

I think the same can be said of the Sovereignty of God.

LISTEN: We do not hold this doctrine because it is easy to grasp, accept, or understand; we hold this doctrine because God has revealed that **this** is what He is like.

As we delve into this text, there will be a lot of questions. Some will be answered today, others will be answered by later sermons, or by the Holy Spirit Himself... But one thing is true: all will be answered in time.

LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING AMAZING:

Turn over to **Romans 11:33**. When Paul completes the most robust section in all of scripture on the Sovereignty of God notice what He immediately does.... He sings a Doxology.

Romans 11:33-36 (NASB95)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Notice that Paul teaches the Sovereignty of God and it results in a spontaneous concert of praise.

We teach it and it splits a Church. It divides friendships.

FRIENDS LISTEN:

If this doctrine does not cause you to rejoice like never before – than we don't understand it.

I want to show you this morning why Paul would be so excited about this doctrine.

TEXT: Romans 8:26-27 (ESV)

26 Likewise the Spirit helps in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Paul is writing to a group of believers who are already experiencing hostility and hardship. He is trying to encourage them, but the Holy Spirit knows that even harder times are ahead— so, He inspires Paul to pen these words.

In fact, within 5 years of this letter being written, some of those who would read this letter:

- Would be beheaded
- Others crucified like Christ
- Some would be fed to the lions in the Coliseum
- Some would be burned alive to light the streets of Rome
- Children would see their parents die for faith in Christ, parents would lose their children to persecution

No doubt there are countless questions. There was a ton of **WHY GOD?**

BTW, you do know it's ok to question God, don't you?

- The majority of the Psalms are David asking God why?
- John the Baptist sent messengers to ask if Jesus was the Messiah or should we expect another? You know what he was saying? *If you are the Messiah, why am I in prison?*
- Jesus on the cross said, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"

There is a great quote from one of my favorite movies – ***The Life of Pi***:

"Faith in God is an opening up, a letting go, a deep trust, a free act of love—but sometimes it was so hard to love. Sometimes my heart was sinking so fast with anger, desolation and weariness, I was afraid it would sink to the very bottom of the Pacific and I would not be able to lift it back up."

(Coffee with friends)

Guys... It's ok to question God, BUT you have to be ready for the answer.

1. God's sovereignty guarantees that you will not suffer in vain.
2. God's sovereignty guarantees you will make it all the way to glory.
3. God's sovereignty guarantees you His perfect favor.

I. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GUARANTEES THAT YOU WILL NOT SUFFER IN VAIN

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

1. He is ***not*** saying all things work together for good - for *everyone*.

It pertains to those *who love God*, who are *called according to His purpose*.

Those are two defining marks of the believer.

1. They have been *called*. This is the calling ***unto salvation***. So, if you are saved you are the called.
2. How do you know you are called unto salvation – Paul tells us... because *you love God*.

There is an *unmistakable, unshakable, persistent presence* of a love for God and the things pertaining to God.

2. He is ***not*** saying all things ARE good.

Christian scientists believe all things are good. Guys, the Bible doesn't teach that.

There are some things that are bad, some things that are evil.

It's not good that a child is born handicap.
It's not good that you get cancer.
It's not good that marriages end.
It's not good that children rebel.
It's not good that you get sick.

There are millions of things that are bad because of the presence of sin.

But the text says that **GOD IS BIGGER THAN ALL THAT STUFF** and **able** to redeem **EVERY** situation for your good and His glory!

3. He *is* saying that God is able to even use apparent or seemingly BAD things to accomplish His good purpose.

God can draw straight lines with very crooked sticks.

Isaiah 61:3 says God can make a “crown of beauty from ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.”

Remember:

1. **Joseph** -- Rejected by brothers, accused by Potipher's wife, forgotten in prison.

But when it was all said and done Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good to the saving of many lives" (Gen 50:20).

So what happened - God let Joseph suffer, not just for his good, but so that many lives might be preserved.

2. **Moses** – As soon as he's born, the daughter of the man who wants him dead the most finds him.

When he grows up, Israel rejects him and he flees Egypt for his life.

But then through a series of extraordinary events (*prince of Egypt to a shepherd of goats*), Moses realized that God orchestrated all of that in order to bring him to the back side of Median because God had a burning bush waiting for him.

3. **Simon Peter** – In Luke 22, Jesus tells Peter that Satan has asked to sift Peter like wheat. And Jesus says to Peter in so many words, “I think that it will be good for you.” But I'll pray for you. When you have returned, strengthen your brothers.

4. **Church at Symerna** – (Rev 2:8-11) Jesus tells the church in Smyrna that they are going to suffer, but Jesus says, “I’ll watch, I’ll limit it.”

LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING:

What's the **worst** act that ever occurred in human history?
The murder, death, and crucifixion of the Son of God.

What's the **greatest** act that occurred in human history?
The murder, the death, the crucifixion of the Son of God.

God can use evil (*disappointment, brokenness, loss, and pain*) to accomplish His purpose and plan.

God *CAN AND DOES* draw straight lines with crooked sticks!

NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU. Have you suffered? Are you suffering? If not, you will.

Remember the context in which Paul is writing – remember what Paul’s audience is about to go through:

Within 5 years of this letter being written:

- Some would be beheaded
- Others crucified like Christ
- Some would be fed to the lions in the coliseum
- Some would be burned alive to light the streets of Rome

Many of you are going through some tough times right now. Others of you have come out of a dark season. Still, there are some of you that are just now, or soon to will be, entering hard times.

Paul’s message to us this morning is **DON’T FEAR! DON’T LOSE HEART!**

Don’t fear the suffering – embrace it; Recognize that God is doing something. He is working for your good. In ways that we cannot see, in ways that we don’t understand, but He is working!

Remember **vv. 26-27** – The Holy Spirit purposely had Paul write those words before v. 28 to let his audience know that God the Father knows and sees them – He knows how hard this is going to be for us.

He understands that in the midst of pain and loss, we are going struggle to understanding why God is doing what He is doing. Why He has allowed these things.

We are going to have trouble processing, struggle accepting, and struggle trusting.

And so, Paul primes their hearts by telling them that the Spirit of God is personally bringing them to the Father and interceding for them (*strength, grace, faith, God's will be done*).

God's purposes *will* be accomplished in the lives of His children, but whatever He is doing, He **ALWAYS** has our well-being in mind.

For whatever reason, God, in His infinite wisdom, has determined that the greatest tool in His arsenal to bring about transformation in the life of a believer is the *Furnace of Affliction*

Romans 5:3-4

3And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, **4**endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever heard someone say, "I was born with a silver-spoon in my mouth. I have had every blessing, every opportunity, and every chance in life given to me. I have been trouble-free and carefree and that is why I love Jesus so much?"

NO - but I can line up hundreds of testimonies where someone says, "I went through hell on earth! I didn't think I was going to make. I lost everything. BUT, through it all, God used it to make me who I am today."

LISTEN: When bad things happen, the doctrine of sovereignty enables you to survive!

ILLUSTRATION: There is so much that happens in this world that doesn't make sense – this last year was ridiculous! Things were out of control; we saw our nation unraveling at the seams.

Think of all that you have endured personally. All that we have endured corporately. Chaos! (***A Dumpster Fire***)

I can live with the fact I don't understand everything, I can live with the fact that God's got a massively huge plan that encompasses all the trouble, evil, and sin I will ever encounter in this life.

However, I **will not** live with the idea that God is not in charge.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know that plans I have for you declares (*spoken it into reality*) the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

“Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see.” (Corrie Ten Boom)

God's Sovereignty Guarantees that no trial you go through is wasted. It all has a purpose! All of it has value!

II. God's Sovereignty Guarantees you will make it all the way to glory

How do we know this? Because, in [vv.29-30](#), Paul gives us what Theologians call the **“Golden Chain of Salvation.”**

²⁹ For those whom He **foreknew** He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom He predestined He also **called**, and those whom He called He also **justified**, and those whom He justified He also **glorified**.

1. God **Foreknew** You
2. God **Predestined** You
3. God **Called** You
4. God **Justified** You
5. God **Glorified** You

1. Paul says God **Foreknew You**

This is speaking of something that theology calls the **omniscience of God**. It is one of His incommunicable attributes.

It is idea that God knows everything. That there is **nothing** that is hidden from His complete wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.

Many people think that this means that God knows the future. And He does; but this word for foreknowledge means much, much more than that.

Foreknew is from *pro-ginosko*, a compound word that means more than just simply knowing beforehand.

In Scripture, this word, and its Hebrew equivalent, often carry the idea of **special intimacy** and is frequently used of a love relationship.

In the statement "**Cain knew his wife and she conceived**" (**Gen. 4:17**), Cain knew her intimately (*marital relations*).

Amos 3:2, where the Lord says to Israel, "**You only have I known among all the families of the earth.**" God "knew" Israel in the unique sense of having predetermined that she would be His chosen people.

2 Tim 2:19 – Paul writes to young Timothy and tells him, "**The Lord knows those who are His.**"

So, foreknowledge doesn't at all mean foreseeing, but rather, it carries the idea of **INTENTIONALLY WRAPPING YOU INTO GOD'S GREATER PLAN.**

Jeremiah 1:5 (NASB95)

⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

So, in Romans 8:29 Paul says you were **foreknown**. You were uniquely marked out, and wrapped into a greater purpose.

2. God *Predestined* You

It's the Greek word - **Pro-horizo**, from which we get our English word **Horizon**.

The basic idea of the Greek term refers to **the setting of any boundaries or limits**.

This word is used in **Acts 2:23** referring to Jesus
²³ this Man, delivered over by the *predetermined* plan and foreknowledge of God... (NASB)

The suffering of Christ was not at the hands of man. It wasn't conceived in the heart of men; but by the predetermined purpose of God. He set the boundaries. He set the limits.

Whatever God is allowing to happen in your life – no matter how hard, heart wrenching, or challenging it may be – God has set the limit of it! God has predetermined the boundaries of it!

It was according to the kind intention of His will!

3. God *Called* You

That *calling* is the calling unto salvation

1 Corinthians 1:2

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called* to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...

4. God *Justified* You

Remember: Justification is a judicial act of God whereby He declares the guilty sinner, innocent and righteous in His sight based solely on the merits of Christ.

In other words, God declared you innocent based on nothing that you have done.

5. God *Glorified* You

You say, "wait a minute - I'm not glorified yet."

In God's economy, if God promises it, it's as good as already done.

1. God's Sovereignty Guarantees that no trial you go through is wasted.
2. God's Sovereignty Guarantees you will make it all the way to glory.

III. God's Sovereignty Guarantees You His Perfect Favor

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

You say, "Well lots of people can be against us." - But who can really make any headway against us if God is for us?

What can they really do? If they take our lives... well that is not all that bad.

Paul said "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord!"

That's not all that bad, is it?

In the following verses, Paul reminds us of the character of God.

1. He is *generous*

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him *graciously* give us all things?

When you feel that you cannot understand v.28, and you begin to distrust the wisdom and goodness of God -- look again to v.32. Here it says that He doesn't take things away from us... but freely gives us all things; graciously.

The question we should be asking is... what is He giving us?

2. He does not *accuse* us

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

3. He does not *condemn* us

34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

4. Nothing can *separate* us from Him

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, Paul is writing to encourage His brothers and sisters in Christ who are facing or about to face incredible hardship – hardship that will test their faith in the goodness and wisdom of God. Hardship that will cause every fiber of their being to push away from God and ask the question "WHY GOD?"

It is in this context that Paul writes, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "I want you to know that God has you! It will be ok, just hold on and trust Him."

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION: A Father-Son retreat in Missouri always concludes with a trust exercise. The boys have to walk to a cliff and once they are there, they have to jump blindly into space and rappel down a cliff face. Every time, something remarkable happens. When the boys get to the rappelling stations, they don't want the trained experts holding their rope. When they make that scary leap into the unknown; they *always, always* want their father holding the rope.

Romans 8:26-39 tells us that life is going to require you to jump from time to time – you will walk through the valley of the shadow... but remember, always remember Your Sovereign, All Powerful Father is holding the rope and He promises it's all going to work out for your good and His glory.

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GUARANTEES THAT YOU WILL NOT SUFFER IN VAIN.
2. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GUARANTEES YOU WILL MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO GLORY.
3. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY GUARANTEES YOU HIS PERFECT FAVOR.