

“Diving Deep - For Good”

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Graphics: scuba gear, water, diving, bible, future, baking bread

Big Truth: The word of God guides our lives, but so often we skim the surface with our reading or bible study. This series will take us deeper into common verses that hold incredible meaning for our lives. The people of the Panama UMC are called to dive deeper into the Word for life.

Focus Phrase: The sum total of my life in Christ is for God’s good!

1. Introduction

- A. Today, we complete our Diving Deep series. We’ve looked at ONE verse per week, and have dived as deeply as we could, in the time we had, to SEE and APPLY the truth of several popular and important verses in the Bible.
- B. We’ve looked at John 3:5, Phil. 4:13, Joshua 1:9, and Jer. 29:11. Today, we go back to the New Testament to finish up by diving deep into Romans 8:28.
- C. Diving deep allows us to see each verse in its original context - as it was written by the author inspired by the Holy Spirit. Diving deep has allowed us to see the one MEANING of each verse in that context. AND, diving deep has opened to us the application of EACH verse to our lives today.
- D. So, if we have one more tank of air...let’s put on our flippers and wetsuit, put on the mask and tank...and dive deep into our last verse from Romans 8:28.
- E. We’re called, as followers of Jesus, to dive as deeply as we can into God’s Word written in the bible but also a living and active word through the life of Jesus Christ.
- F. The way we access the meaning and application of the Word of God is through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- G. So, today, as we prepare our hearts and ears to receive the Word, let’s pray specifically that the Holy Spirit present with us will break up the ground in our hearts so that we can receive the seeds, the water, and the energy that’s needed to grow fruit in our lives for Christ. Let’s pray...

H. PRAY!

2. Scripture

A. READ Romans 8:28 (together)

B. CONTEXT

- i. Now, unlike Paul’s letter to the Philippians, which we looked at earlier, Paul was NOT in prison when he wrote this letter to the church in Rome.
- ii. Paul wrote this letter sometime around the year 57 AD, from the Greek city of Corinth, where he was raising up a new church. This letter was written mostly to the Jewish community in Rome, especially those who were follow

Jesus' commands. But we also need to remember that the people of Rome were mostly pagans who did not follow Jesus. The CHURCH in Rome needed to be strong, despite persecution from those who didn't follow Jesus...and leaders who just wanted to keep the peace.

- iii. Paul wrote this letter as a way of introducing himself and letting the Roman believers know that he was on his way to Spain and he would stop by to meet them and encourage them on his way.
- iv. This letter to the Romans is Paul's longest letter and, is Paul's most comprehensive set of theological and Christological ideas in one writing.
- v. Throughout history, Romans has changed the hearts of people into believers' hearts. It's changed lives and oriented countless people to the truth of salvation and justification by faith.
- vi. In fact, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was transformed by the book of Romans. Here's an excerpt from Wesley's journal written in 1738: *In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.* (Works, "Journals," May 24, 1738, 14).
- vii. Maybe this letter has been something you've read over and over, or maybe you haven't yet had the opportunity to read it. I DO know, that if you DO read this letter from Paul, that you will not remain unchanged.
- viii. Right in the middle of the letter, we come to our deep dive verse for today.
- ix. Maybe you've heard this verse a thousand times. Maybe you've see this verse on a billboard or on social media. This verse holds incredible truth about who God is and what God is up to.
- x. Before we get to the deep dive, let me give us some cautions related to this verse and how it gets mis-applied often.

C. CAUTIONS

- i. The first caution - or warning - is not only to NOT take this verse out of its context, but to NOT chop the verse up into convenient pieces in order to give hope to those to whom it was never meant to give hope.
 - a. You may hear someone quote just the first part of this verse: "We know that all things work together for good." And that's where they stop!
 - b. The real danger with chopping that first part of the verse out and using it as a salve on any circumstance is that it's just not true. We DON'T know

that all things work together for good. In fact, we're pretty sure that sometimes, things fall apart and work against what WE think is good.

- c. The worst danger of this chop job is when a believer, while maybe well-intentioned, approaches someone who has had a tragedy (like the death of a child or loss of a job) and says, "Welp, the bible says that all things work together for good, so...I guess this is a GOOD thing!" That's tragic! Look, this may be controversial, but not everything happens for a reason that we can see. God knows all things, but some things just happen in this world.
 - d. And what's worse is when people throw this half of the verse at someone who doesn't believe in God's existence. The result is usually extreme anger and a rejection of any attempts the Holy Spirit was making in that person's life.
- ii. The second caution is that this verse is not for the world.
 - a. This verse was written by Paul to be understood, experienced, and applied to the lives of those who - as the second part says - who **love God and are called according to His purpose**.
 - b. The basic understanding of our faith is that we are to love God. That idea goes all the way back to the Jewish Shema, which states, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."
 - c. God commands those who want to be faithful and to receive the benefits of being faithful to LOVE GOD.
 - d. When Paul writes, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose," he means those who are followers of Jesus. In a minute we'll dive deep into what those 'things' are and what that 'purpose' is, but this verse is not for us to launch out there to people who don't follow Jesus. And, in fact, we should be careful when we quote this verse to believers in a tough spot.
 - e. This verse DOES give us hope and courage...it CAN give believers the strength to persevere any storm...if we understand it.
 - f. Let's dive a little deeper to see how powerful this verse is...

D. DEEP DIVE

- i. This verse is in a section of the letter that commentators would later call Paul's description of *FUTURE GLORY*.
- ii. Starting in verse 18, Paul was describing the reality that IN THIS LIFE there will be suffering. Creation is groaning in labor pains, Paul said in verse 22. AND, not only Creation, but we, ourselves, as part of Creation, are groaning inwardly, waiting for the day when Jesus returns.

- iii. In verse 18, though, Paul started this section by saying, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.”
- iv. We know there is suffering. We KNOW there is hardship. Creation is groaning to be re-made. Our bodies and our minds and our world is desperately groaning to be made new.
- v. Part of that struggle and groaning is that the believers in Rome were all saved in hope for this new thing to come, Paul wrote in verse 24. Yet, sin has caused not only OUR struggling as humans, but the struggles we see in Creation itself.
- vi. Yet, it’s in that current reality and ever-present struggle that the Holy Spirit is praying for us and with us...and through us! The Holy Spirit is interceding for us (the saints) according to God’s will.
- vii. So, let’s review before we get some practical application.
 - a. We know there’s something coming that’s awesome - the glory that’s being revealed in Jesus and His promised return.
 - b. We know that even though something good is coming, we’re stuck in this reality as aliens in a foreign land (exiles)...with all the consequences of our sin nature causing trouble in our lives and in Creation itself.
 - c. We and Creation are groaning to be reborn.
 - d. As we groan, the Holy Spirit is not only comforting and praying, but is preparing us for that glorious future when Jesus returns, which is God’s promised will for us and Creation.
- viii. SO....SO... “We know (we are assured) that all things (big things and little things) work together for (GOD’S) good for those who love God, who are called according to his (holy) purpose - his MISSION.”
- ix. As we look at this verse in context, diving deep into the depths of Paul’s passion for the church, we see that this verse has very little to do with the individual circumstances of today working out for good.
- x. This verse is all about EVERYTHING - the sum total of our lives and this world - finally, in the end, working out for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
- xi. That purpose is: to be made holy, ready for Jesus to return.
- xii. God’s purpose is to redeem all of Creation and us in it.
- xiii. All things means the big things and the little things...all things finally working for God’s good plan for this world...leading those who love Him to the full presence of Jesus when He returns to usher in the Kingdom on earth.
- xiv. Let’s get some application...

3. Application

- A. I like to bake. On my Sabbath, I like to spend time in the kitchen, following a good recipe, to make something that tastes great for us to eat.
- B. Most of the time, my go-to recipe is for 100% Whole Wheat Bread. There's just nothing like a piece of warm, hearty wheat bread with some butter melted onto it. It tastes great and warms the insides. There's really nothing bad about a freshly baked loaf of bread to warm the kitchen up.
- C. Now, that loaf is made up of 6-7 ingredients that, when put together and baked, make bread. Yet, do each of the ingredients themselves taste good?
- D. The ingredients for this bread are water, yeast, honey, flour, powdered milk, butter, olive oil, and salt. Now, some of those ingredients taste OK - the honey and butter and oil, maybe. The water is just water. The flour and yeast and dried milk and salt would taste pretty terrible if you just sat down to a bowl of them each.
- E. Yet, when they're combined and allowed to rise and bake, the bread is amazing! There's nothing like it!
- F. You see where this is going, right? The individual experiences of our lives are like the individual ingredients. Some of them are OK. Some are really good. Other things we experience are bad, distasteful...even painful and depressing.
- G. Clearly, God is not working **every individual thing** in your life for YOUR good like honey and butter. Yet, sometimes things are good.
- H. God's not working every thing in your life for punishment, or bland living, either. Yet, sometimes we experience tragic times, painful times, groaning.
- I. YET, (here's the GOOD NEWS) God takes the sum total of all your experiences, and adds them to the sum total of all the days in the lives of all other believers, and believers from all of history, and **works them together for good... to HIS GOOD...HIS PLAN.**
- J. In essence, he takes the raw experiences of every believer and is the Master Baker, combining, rising, and baking them so that ONE DAY we will all experience HIS GLORY!
- K. God working all things for good is completely focused on the eternal Kingdom that is coming and not on today's trials or successes.
- L. And, the bonus for us NOW, is that we're in this together, AND that the Holy Spirit is IN us to help us now, guide our lives, and keep us focused on the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- M. In order to activate this promise in your life, today, here are two catalysts:
 - i. First, **Be a God-lover.**

- a. Jesus said the greatest commandment was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment.”
 - b. Being a God-lover isn’t some secret society that has a handshake only few know. It’s not a mystery, although at times it’s mysterious.
 - c. Loving God means giving your life up for Him. Your time to worship, pray, and serve. Your will yielded to His will as shown you in the Bible. It’s giving up your fleshly desires in order to live into the freedom you have in Christ. It’s ABIDING in Christ alone.
 - d. Being a God-lover looks different for each of us, but it’s spending time in His presence, praying without ceasing, following his commands, and loving those that He loves.
 - e. Which leads us to the second activation point:
- ii. **Second, Stay on Mission.**
- a. The second part of the greatest commandment according to Jesus is to love your neighbor as yourself.
 - b. Our mission and vision are to make disciples of Jesus Christ by lovingly giving every person in our community the opportunity to believe in and follow Jesus.
 - c. You can live the mission in countless ways, but the key is to passionately be living out the mission and vision every day.
 - d. This is all based on the fact that you are, ‘...called according to His purpose.’ Your calling includes your spiritual gifts and using those to build up the church and grow the kingdom. For some, that means serving others. For some, it’s leading or administering. Or interceding in prayer or giving generously or discerning the future mission.
 - e. God has incredible plans for you in His everlasting future. But you and I aren’t there yet...so NOW is the time to Stay on Mission.

4. Conclusion

- A. Be careful with this verse out there. This verse is like dynamite in a small package. It holds an incredible amount of power to change things in the lives of those who know what it means. But it can also do damage to those who aren’t yet following Jesus.
- B. Be a God-lover and stay on mission for God. When you do that, then all things truly DO work together for God’s good plan.
- C. Next time you bake something, I pray you’ll think about your life now...the everlasting life that Jesus offers us through his sacrifice and glory!
- D. That glory is God’s plan for YOU too! For good! **Let’s pray...**