

Linchpin pt4

Ryan Abernathy / General

Linchpin / Romans 8:28–30

When I started this series, I indicated that the impetus for it was a book I read by NT Wright called [Into the Heart of Romans](#). For me, this book took one of my most beloved sections of scripture and really made it more alive and more meaningful than it had already been. I learned new things. And I love that.

The section of the passage we are looking at today was the MOST powerful and transformative for me in the book, and I hope that as we walk through it this morning, it will come alive for you as well, because the first of the three verses we will look at today is one of the more leaned on passages in many of our personal canon's, but its life and meaning will be greatly enhanced by what we have to learn today, and I think we will all take even more comfort in the passage after this morning.

Turn with me to [Romans 8:28-30](#).

[Romans 8:28](#) is one of those passages we quote to someone whose life is in the midst of tragedy, trauma, or painful transformation. And let's be honest, when someone quotes this verse to us in that moment, it is not always a comfort. Yet, we who are seeing this person suffer are wanting them to know that God has a plan or purpose for what is happening.

Romans 3. Living in the Spirit (8:1–39)

The Christian faith is never presented in Scripture as a static relationship. A person's salvation is not something that took place sometime in the past with little or no impact in the present. By definition, a relationship is a continuing affair. A vital ongoing love for God is the necessary prerequisite for his active intervention in the affairs of our life. **From the human side we love God. From God's side we are called in accordance with his purpose.** By calling Paul meant an effectual calling—one in which our response is invariably positive

But what if that's not all? What if, for those of us standing beside the person who is suffering, there is also a message and calling for US in this passage?

When we were in the chapter last week, we talked about the role we have as children of God to bring hope into a creation that is groaning for relief from the wages of sin. And how we should be agents of mercy and grace and hope in those spaces.

Well, if ALL of this passage goes together, and it does, then why would this verse be separate from that calling?

The key is a word in Greek that isn't always handled well in translation, because of a fear that some have of sending the wrong message about salvation. In Greek, the word is **"synergeo"** Does that look familiar to anyone?

We get our word synergy from this word. Now most of us have heard at one time or another that word- probably in the context of work or a relationship- at its base it means "working together" and its negative meaning to not be working at cross purposes to one another.

That's the word Paul uses and in most places it is translated "things work together for good" but **the problem is "things" is not the subject of the sentence. God is the subject** (to the surprise of no one lol)

So that means this passage is not saying that God is working like a puppet master to take awful circumstances and make them better in the long run, or to have a greater purpose. **Synergeo means something much different. And this fits with other statements Paul makes about us as co-laborers with God in passages like [1 Cor 3:9](#) and [2 Cor 6:1](#).**

It means we are working WITH God in the midst of suffering- for others, creation, ourselves- to do the very thing God has called us to do in this whole passage, and in the story of His redemption of the world- **to see hope rise out of ashes, to see salvation occur and to see the Kingdom advance until the return of Jesus, which we hope for so that this season of suffering might end and all things might be made new!**

Now why would someone NOT want that to be the meaning here? Simple, the fear was to say we are working with God would imply that we are earning our salvation. Which is only a problem if that's what this passage is about- which it's NOT, because in so many other places in this very letter Paul talks about salvation being a sovereign act of God alone.

This verse, and this passage, are about what salvation equips us and mandates US to do in response to God's sovereign act!

"The Gospel shaped call of God is not, in this passage, a matter of rescuing them from sin and death, though of course it has that affect as well. It is about being called for a purpose, a purpose that works not just for them but through them."- NT Wright, [Into the Heart of Romans](#) p162-3.

The follow up verses to this passage are drawn from the book of Isaiah, especially chapter 45, and would have been recognized by the Jews in the audience, and made sense to them in this context, **because they were about Israel being chosen for a purpose- the very Messiah who they now served.**

*“God’s loving call of Jesus’ followers...was not aimed at helping them to escape this world and go and live with Him somewhere else. **The purpose was so that, in rescuing them from sin and death, God would manifest His glory through them, not least through their suffering and prayer. God’s purposes are going ahead, and He [calls] human beings to share in those purposes, as [Genesis 1](#) indicated He would do.”**- p166, Wright*

And the problem we face, is that in the midst of all this suffering, just like the Jews coming out of exile in Isaiah, we don’t always feel like the Kingdom is advancing, or we are helping, or that anything that is going on is according to any kind or reason or purpose. So, Paul, knowing the audience, and God knowing us, takes **the next two verses to remind us who we are and Who is the One who has saved us.**

Look at verse 29.

This is a prophetic call- like the one to Jeremiah. It is a statement that **God had a plan for you before you knew Him-** not just saving you but a purpose to shape you into the image of His Son FOR HIS PURPOSE.

Romans 3. Living in the Spirit (8:1–39)

God has foreordained that believers be brought into “moral conformity to the likeness of his Son.” What is predestined is that we become like Christ

Wright handles the Greek in this verse this way “**shaped according to the model of His Son.**” And what is a model- a representation of the original. That’s what we are- ambassadors, representatives, models- sent out to put Jesus on display to the world- in their groaning, in our suffering, in every aspect of life- for the Kingdom.

And if you go back to earlier in the passage- how does this happen? Thru the indwelling of the Spirit. *“the Spirit is given so that Jesus believers may become Jesus look-alikes.”*- Wright, p 170

“We who believe, we who love God, have been marked out to be shaped according to this pattern, this messianic reality, this glory revealing family.” - p173, Wright

And we move to verse 30, which summarizes the entire passage thus far, before the crescendo we will reach next week.

This verse is who WE are. **Known** by God before we knew Him. **Called out** personally and specifically by God. **Justified**- made righteous, worthy, holy- by Him by the blood of Jesus. And one day arriving with Him in a renewed state in a renewed place for eternity.

Knowing this emboldens the church at Rome. They are no longer afraid of the emperor or the people or the arena or the cross. They know who they are and who they are with.

Church we are the same people with the same calling. We just need to remember who we are and what our purpose is. The purpose for which God has called us and equipped us for.

Will we be those people?