

How God Is At Work in Your Life
Romans 8:26-30
#34th in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans
Faith Community Church – June 252006

Objective: *to encourage our congregation that God, who began a good work in them, will bring it to completion, and is at work in us at all times, including times of difficulty.*

Introduction – Turn to Romans 8

Author Phil Yancey wrote a book entitled, *Where is God When it Hurts?* I think that is a question that most of us have asked at one time or another. The passage we're going to study today gives us some answers. I hope it will bring you encouragement and comfort.

The immediate context of this paragraph is that as God's children, we are going to go through difficulty in life, but that those difficulties – no matter how extensive – cannot be compared with the glory that awaits us. What Paul calls "glory" refers to the future when God will resurrect our bodies and make all things new. This leads us to live with a sense of hope.

While we have hope in the future, we also have encouragement in the present that God is at work in our lives. This text tells us how God works in our life circumstances to accomplish his goal for us.

How God Is At Work in Your Life

1. God is at work through the praying of the Holy Spirit (8:26-27).
 - a. It is not uncommon for us to not know what we should pray for, and that is especially true during times of difficulty. Our first impulse might be for us to ask God to bring our difficulty to an end – and there is nothing wrong with that, but when we remember that God uses our difficulties in various ways, that ought to color what we pray for.
 - b. In these verses Paul describes a ministry of the Holy Spirit, who "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."
 - i. Who is a saint – means "holy ones" used to refer generally to all who have trusted in Christ.
 - ii. In a way that is imperceptible to us, the Holy Spirit prays that God would accomplish his design in our lives.
 - c. This raises a question: why does the Holy Spirit have to pray? While that is a good question, the point here is not to teach us about the interrelationship of the members of the Trinity. Instead, Paul wants us to be encouraged that the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in each of our lives, representing our specific needs and circumstances to God the Father for the purpose of God bringing to pass what he desires for us.
 - d. This raises a second question: if the Holy Spirit is praying, why should we pray? The simplest and most straightforward answer is that we are to

- pray because we are told to pray. The presence of the Holy Spirit in your life does not make unnecessary your own relationship with God.
- e. A third question: what is the relationship between the praying of the Holy Spirit and our own prayers? I like what one person says about this: *I take it that Paul is saying, then, that our failure to know God's will and consequent inability to petition God specifically and assuredly is met by God's Spirit, who himself expresses to God those intercessory petitions that perfectly match the will of God. When we do not know what to pray for – yes, even when we pray for things that are not best for us – we need not despair, for we can depend on the Spirit's ministry of perfect intercession "on our behalf."*¹
 - f. We can be encouraged, then, that God is at work at all times in our lives as the Holy Spirit prays for us according to the will of God.
2. His is at work through his providential superintending of the events of our lives (8:28).
 - a. We should be more familiar than we are with the meaning and implications of God's providence. Contrary to the idea that God is a disinterested party, and a mere observer of history, the biblical doctrine of providence asserts that God is active in superintending all that he has created generally, and specifically involved in the lives of this children.
 - i. Paul expresses God's care for us in verse 28. Note that there are a couple of different ways in which the Greek sentence can be translated. A more helpful way might be that of the NASB: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God. . ."
 - b. Let's clarify what Paul is saying:
 - i. He is not saying that God will reverse all of our difficulties.
 - ii. He is not saying that the difficulties themselves are good or pleasant.
 - iii. He is saying that in all situations God is working behind the scenes for our good.
 1. Because we don't like pain we'd like to say that if God wants to bring about good, let him take away what troubles me.
 2. But God is primarily interested in our spiritual development, not our comfort, so through difficulties he works to strengthen our character, build faithfulness, use us as examples to others, etc.
 - c. It is also important to realize that God is not a goalie. By that I mean that God is not a surprised responder to the events that come our way.
 3. Finally, God is at work to bring his purpose for us to completion (8:29-30).
 - a. This purpose, which Paul speaks about in verse 28, is laid out for us in verses 29-30. God's purpose for us is to be conformed to (shaped after)

¹ Douglas Moo: The Epistle to the Romans (NIC), page 526

the image of Christ. Simply stated: God is in the process of making us like Jesus.

- b. There are a chain of words that are used to describe this process, and each of them would be worth an examination. But Paul's point impresses us with one main fact: the process of bringing you to that place of glory, being made like Christ is, from beginning to end, the work of God.
 - i. Who initiated the process of saving you? God did.
 - ii. Who determined that you would believe? God did.
 - iii. Who arranged the circumstances of your life so that you would both hear and respond to the message of the Cross? God did.
 - iv. Who made you right with God when you were helplessly lost? God did.
 - v. Who gets you to glory? God does. In fact, it is as good as already accomplished. You are as good as glorified.
- c. It is no wonder that Paul cries out in the next verse, "What then shall we say to these things?"

Conclusion and Response

How do we respond to what God says in this passage?

1. Be encouraged when you go through times of trouble.
2. Be assured of God's hands-on care in all moments of life.
3. Learn to see life through God's eyes.
4. Trust in Christ.