



JULY 4, 2021 | REV. MINHONG

“Understanding God’s Purpose” (Romans 8:28)

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Before I begin today's message, I think it is proper for me to talk about the recent changes that CoaH is going through, just for a short time.

I want to begin by acknowledging that we have been served well by Pastor Peter. He worked hard to bring this community of believers closer to the Lord. He preached the Gospel of grace and helped this congregation to be mature in the Lord. Under his leadership, City on a Hill grew in number and maturity. I wish him well in his new ministry in Los Angeles.

I can understand that some of you have difficulty understanding why he had to leave. I have said at two meetings with the deacons, one Life Group leaders meeting, and two Town Hall meetings with everyone the following.

1) Pastor Peter needs to work in a setting where he is the senior pastor, and 2) City on a Hill and the rest of Young Nak (KM) need to be more in an interdependent relationship while respecting and keeping each ministry's distinctive, needs, and contexts. I will continue to work with the elders and the deacons to ensure that the transition will be graceful and God-honoring for the Kingdom's sake.

English ministry began as a department within KM. Over the years, it has grown to be a whole congregation, more than capable of being on its own. Naturally, CoaH focused on its identity and ministry, while the relationship with the rest of the church began to drift. I believe that it is time to address this issue and find an amicable path that will bring out the best of the two congregations for the Kingdom's sake.

In the process, I expect some of you may not want this transition of going from dependence to independence (almost) and now to interdependence. Instead, you would rather see CoaH continue the path of independence elsewhere. Be assured that the Session and I are fully aware of this, and we will come up with a solution that is God-honoring and Kingdom-building. Please bear with us as we work through each piece.

In the transition, I ask all our CoaH members to be in prayer and seek the Spirit's leading. The most crucial posture we need to have is what the Lord taught us on the night he was arrested, "Love one another as I have loved you." Yes, we will work through this, and we will do it in a loving and caring manner.

In the end, I pray that all of you will emerge with a stronger faith than before and love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and spirit.

Now, let me turn to today's text, Romans 8:28.



I want to show you the ministry of the Holy Spirit as we find in Romans 8. This chapter is perhaps the most important chapter of all the chapters in the Bible, at least in my estimate. It teaches us about the perseverance of the saints, how those whom God has called will continue and finish the race because God is at their side.

If you find that the past two years of the pandemic have slowed your spiritual progress (even reversed it), then you will want to read, study, and meditate upon the truths found in Romans 8. Personally, early on in my Christian walk (in university), I memorized the entire chapter and would rehearse it in memory many times. This chapter would help me focus on what Christ has done in my life and what the Spirit is currently doing in my life. I encourage you to commit this chapter to memory. You will thank me for it.

I want to draw your attention to four aspects of the Spirit's ministry in the believer's life as found in Romans 8. The apostle Paul wants us to know these aspects.

First, the Spirit brings life to us, and we are to live under the law of the Spirit of life (Romans 8:1-2).

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Paul contrasts life under the law with life under the Spirit. Legalism results in judgment and condemnation, but life in the Spirit brings joy and peace.

Every believer must experience the life-giving Spirit. When we feel we are at the end of the rope, that insurmountable pressures in life surround us, we must seek the comfort that the Spirit gives. In prayer and praise, we sense the Spirit prompting us to let go of our worries and to trust in Him alone.

Under the life of the law (legalism), we learned to judge and condemn others. So, the figure that we pointed to others turned around and pointed to us. We feel judged and condemned. That is life under the law.

But life under the Spirit is not about judging and condemning. It is about forgiveness and reconciliation. Yes, it is about extending and receiving grace and mercy.

Second, the Spirit gives us the strong conviction that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Notice here that the Holy Spirit residing in us communicates to our Spirit that we are not some abandoned orphans or displaced aliens. No, we are but the children of God. The Spirit gives us such a firm conviction that we can call the father 'Abba' (which in Aramaic is a child's term for father). It shows how intimate we feel about God the Father. In Korean, we have the word 'appa,' which is reserved for children and not for grown-up children. Adults typically do not use this term about their father. If they do, it shows their fondness and affection for their fathers.

That is the precise point here. It is the Spirit's ministry to make us feel closer to God and to feel safe and intimate towards God. The Spirit ensures that we have the confidence in approaching the throne of grace. Every believer must be familiar with this ministry of the Spirit. In times of loneliness and uncertainty, we must seek the Spirit's assuring ministry that God loves us and cares for us.



Third, the Spirit prays for us in groaning pain when we cannot pray (Romans 8:26).

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Notice how the verse starts, 'the Spirit helps us in our weakness.' Sometimes, we are at our weak points in our lives. We get hurt, offended, made angrily, and so on. We are overwhelmed by a sense of loss, despair, and even hopelessness. We want to come to the Lord and pray, but we cannot. We do not have the spiritual energy left to go to Him.

Once I visited a church member. His family member was going through a medical emergency. He cried, and I cried. There was nothing much he or anyone could do at that point other than simply leaving it to the Lord.

There are times when we are so inundated with hardships in life that we cannot pray. We come to God, but we cannot pray. What should we do then?

This is where the ministry of the Spirit becomes so vital. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf and prays for us with groans that words cannot express. The Spirit sees the situation we are in, and the Spirit prays for us. As we sense the Spirit praying in us, we gain faith and trust in the Lord that things are in His good hands.

There is one more ministry of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8.

Fourth, the Spirit ensures that God's purpose is served in the end (Romans 8:28).

And we know that in all things God (God the Spirit) works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Every Christian should know this verse. We have received so much comfort from this verse over the years. The verse taught us to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and to spur us on to look to God with more patience and perseverance, knowing that in the end, God's will is done.

Let me make several observation points on this verse. This verse is for those who love God, who have been called according to His purpose.

In other words, God's beloved people are here on earth for a divine purpose. As the old cliché goes, we are here for a reason. We are not just passing by like a particle in the air. God has a purpose for each one of us.

When we talk about God's purpose, we use terms like God's sovereignty and God's providence. God has the absolute power and authority to do what He wills. God also has the infinite wisdom to orchestrate events to serve His grand purpose.

In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Everything that happens in and around us can be used by God towards serving His purpose, that is the good of those who love him, and have been called according to his purpose.

What is this 'good' that we are talking about here?



Let me quote John Stott's comments on this point.

When we say, 'All things work together for good', we don't mean that life will always turn out as we'd like, that healing will come or a difficult situation will turn around. Rather, it means we can have great confidence that in God's sovereignty, he will use everything that happens to us in life for our good. The 'good' that Paul is talking about is our ultimate good, that one day we will be conformed to the image of Christ. So whatever is happening in your life right now, whatever struggles you are dealing with, you can be sure that God will finish his work in you. You will be glorified, and your eternal destiny is secure. (John Stott, Romans 5-8 Devotion)

According to John Stott, the ultimate good that God wants to bring about for us is that we conform to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

We still come out as people who resemble their Master, who says 'come to me ... and learn from me through all the struggles and trials of life, for I am gentle and humble in heart' (Matt. 11:28-29).

Sometimes, we think of only our goals and purposes. We even pray to God, "Lord, how come things are not coming together as planned? Even though I tried as best as I could, why is it that the results are not there?" We complain to God because we are not happy.

Sometimes, God puts us in an awkward situation and expects us to continue. Moses felt that way when God called him at Mount Horeb. God commanded Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, but Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (Exod. 4:13).

God was clear with Moses that it was not about Moses' plan or purpose but the Lord's that counted. As we mature in our walk with the Lord, we realize that it is not about us but God. It is not about my purpose but God's purpose that counts.

That is why we must wait upon the Lord and seek His purpose for our lives. What does He want to do in and through us?

God will make sure that in the end, His purpose will be served. In vs. 28, God most likely refers to the Holy Spirit (as this idea continues from vv. 26-27, where the Spirit is the predicate). The Holy Spirit arranges all things in and around us to make sure that this happens. Our role is to know and follow God's purpose.

The Bible explains God's purpose in terms of His Kingdom and His Righteousness, the work of the Gospel, the Missional Church, and the Image of Jesus Christ in our hearts. May we be diligent in understanding God's purpose for our lives.

We have looked at four ministries of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:

- The life-giving Spirit and the law in which we abide.
- The Spirit gives us the strong conviction that we are God's children.
- The Spirit intercedes on our behalf when we cannot pray.
- And the Spirit who works all things out so that God's purpose in us is lived out.

Did you know, and do you believe, that the Holy Spirit works with all the things that are happening in your life, both the good and the bad, to bring about God's purpose in your life?



We should ask what God is working on in our lives lately. When we keep this in our mind, we will grow and mature as strong Christians, even during the pandemic and even during the difficult transition of the congregation.

May the Lord bless you all.

Let's pray.