



The “All” Series...Session 3

I grew up with double features, serials (continuing series), and cartoons. Saturday was a special day for kids!

When did your bubble burst as to enjoying life as a kid?

Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

When Paul says "ALL things work together for good," does he really mean ALL?

When Does All Mean All?

Dr. James Dobson wrote a book in 1997 entitled *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. The book was written for anyone struggling with trials and heartaches—the death of a loved one, disease, divorce, rejection—in the hopes of understanding the meaning of suffering in the world. When he finishes (last chapter), James Dobson states a revelation about why all this is allowed. He states, “I don't know.” Eleven chapters, and he finally gets to point—I don't know.

Why do we go through trials? Why do we face hardships? Why is there suffering in the world? Why does God allow evil?

I am here in front of you to say, **“I don't know!”** I have to LEAN ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS of God.” **This is where faith is put to a test.**



**What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
leaning on the everlasting arms.**

Oh, we go to the Bible to try to find the answer, and one of the places we often go is Romans 8:28.

We hear the word all and we ask, “Does all mean all?” Yeah...we do with that verse what we do with so many other verses. We take a single verse and try to form a deep theological answer to a complex issue. However, it is not that easy. It can lead us to a shaky theology that fails us in those hardships and difficulties.

Scripture and real estate. In real estate, three things are important: location, location and location. In scripture, three things are important: context, context and context. If we want to understand if ALL means ALL, we have to understand ALL of what the author was saying.

You buy a book. You read the cover and the author tries to get your attention. The interest will normally lead us to reading the back of the book, maybe turn to the preface and know a little more about the book as to the contents...and what the author’s aim and intent may be.

Mostly, however, it is mere speculation. Even reading a chapter might not give you a feel as to what the real meaning, the real summary, the real solution, etc. might be. If I want to really know his/her point, I must read all the book. Only then can I know the context of the content.

Thus, lies the problem with formulating a theology on a singular verse of scripture. If we want to know what Paul meant when he wrote “all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes,” we have to understand the verses around it, and we have to understand where it fits in the entirety of the letter he wrote to the Romans. We can’t know if ALL means ALL until we know ALL the argument Paul is making as he writes those words.

After all the contemplating, addressing this verse with other similar verses with the same theme, and reading the stories in the Word of God, I discover that theology becomes really confusing.

Do you know what I really need? PRACTICALITY.

I just want to know, “Is God working in all this mess man has made of our little world?”

The answer, for Paul and for us, is, “Yes.” All really does mean all.

The overall context of Romans 8:28 is one in which Paul addresses living by the power of the Spirit in the midst of suffering and pain.

Paul was no stranger to suffering; near-death experiences, beatings, imprisonments, and persecutions. He was no Pollyanna. He realized that the overall (upward view) of what is happening on earth was not to discourage, but to encourage the believer in their faith. It was to take the believer to the next step/level of faith, being filled/baptized with the **Spirit of God** who is at work in all those “who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

This Sunday is Pentecost Sunday in our church. We recognize that it is “...‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6b

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” 1 Corinthians 2:12

Paul is not giving this promise (ALL things work together for good) to ALL people, but only to those “who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

But what does this mean? Those who love God are, in this context, Christians, because they are called according to God’s purpose.

We have to be careful to not say, “As long as you love God, things work out; but whenever you are not loving God, things do not work out for your good.” ***That’s bad theology.***

No, if we have faith in Christ Jesus, then “all means all.”

Immediately after, Paul speaks of our conformity to Christ, our glorification, and the inevitable outcome of those who love God.

It is not dependent on how much we love God...but on the finished work of Christ on the cross.

As a Spirit-filled, Baptized believer, I can make adjustments to try my best to conform to Christ’s teachings.

In our life, we will have disappointments, sad experiences, and very...very trying circumstances. One thing we can count on! God is with we who have the Spirit of God living within us...and we know it!

Paul concludes Romans 8 by making an explicit point that nothing can separate us from the love of God (vv. 38-39), and by implication, that would include even our temporary lapses in our understanding of our Savior’s love for us.

“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39

You have heard the term, “By All Means.”

- 1. Certainly; absolutely.**
- 2. In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense.**

As a teacher of the Word of God, I feel it is imperative to speak the truth in love and understanding of those with listening ears.

I feel it so important that we understand why it is important to seek “ALL” of what God wants for us in life.

For years, I was satisfied with my salvation...and, where I had been, what I was doing, and where I am going. I had taught SS, preached, Chairman of the Deacon Board, and...on the “Everything Committee.”

(There really are churches with a “Committee on Committees” Committee) 😊

In reading the Word I knew there was something missing. The Holy Spirit was living in me and helping me in everything I was doing. But I needed some extra energy to push toward excelling in what I was doing for the Lord. I found it in the filling of the Holy Spirit (the releasing of the Holy Spirit to use me wherever, whenever, and in whatever capacity).

God wanted ALL of me and I wanted ALL of HIM. The I AM has made me who I am! Praise God! Praise God!

Acts 2:1-4; 7-8; 12, *“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were **all** with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...⁷ Then they were **all** amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not **all** these who speak Galileans? ⁸—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” ¹² So they were **all** amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”*

