



Growth Group Curriculum
Week 5 – May 16, 2021 – Romans 8:28-30 and James 1:2-4

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

In Romans 8:28-30, the apostle Paul continues to make it clear that following Jesus does not exclude you from suffering and loss. If all of creation is subject to decay, then we should assume that humanity is subjected to decay and loss as well. Yet, in verse 28, Paul makes an incredible statement. God will work all things together for good. Following Jesus does not guarantee you better circumstances than others, but it does guarantee you a better life, and that if anything good happens, it is because God is working it out.

Paul also does not say “how long” it will take for God to work things together for good. Sometimes we get to see that in our lifetime and sometimes we don’t. It should also be noted that sometimes the “crooked paths” (Ecclesiastes 7:13-14) that appear in our lives are allowed by God to cure us of habits or behaviors that could ultimately destroy us. This is not always the case, but sometimes our pain and loss is a teaching moment about something that could really hurt us in the future.

Romans 8:29-30 points us to where all of our circumstances are leading. Paul uses the word “predestined” which can often trip people up. However, in this case, Paul is saying that our futures are fixed (predestined) and we can be sure of this. It should be seen as a word of comfort. Paul is saying this “goodness” that God has planned for you will happen. It is predestined and God has guaranteed it.

Paul then crescendos from being predestined, to being called to justified, then to glorified. It is interesting to note that Paul speaks of our glorification in the past tense, even though we might expect him to speak about it in the future tense. One day we will be glorified is what we might expect, but Paul puts it in the past tense as a way of saying your glorification is already complete. Even as we live here on earth, we experience the “glorified” life.



James 1:2-4 tells us to find joy in our struggles, and this can be hard because we tend to equate joy with happiness. Happiness, though, is based on our circumstances, whereas joy goes deeper and is grounded in our relationship with Jesus. That is why James says, you can count it all joy when you suffer because he knows that suffering makes you more like Jesus. As we persevere we become more like Jesus.

Exploring the Text

Romans 8:28-30;

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. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) The apostle Paul's faith, in the midst of adversity, is certainly inspirational. Share about someone who has inspired you and why.
- 2) What does it mean to become conformed to the image of Jesus? How have you seen that happen in your own life?
- 3) Do you think God ever calls somebody and it makes no difference in his/her life?
- 4) Do you struggle with believing what Paul writes in Romans 8:28?
- 5) What do you think about James' words, which tell us to count it all joy when you find yourself facing trials of many kinds? Is it sin to feel sorrow and grief in a trial? If not, how do these feelings fit in with God's call for joy?
- 6) When you read James 1:2-4, it seems like suffering is an important way in which God produces maturity and perseverance in us. Why do you think trials refine us so well?
- 7) How have the trials and struggles that you have experienced brought you closer to God? Or perhaps they have pushed you away from God?
- 8) What are you facing today, that you are struggling with, to see as "good," or see as something that God could bring something "good" out of? How can your growth group be praying for you?

