

When you have a person on the inside Romans 8:24-39

A little girl was riding along on her bike when she bumped her head on the low hanging branch of a tree. She ran into the house hollering, "*Mom! Mom, Joey hurt me!*" Mom looked up from what she was doing and said, "*Sissy, Joey didn't hurt you. Joey's not even here. He went to the grocery store with your dad.*" The little girl got this startled look on her face. Then in a bewildered sort of voice she said, "*That means stuff like this can happen on its own at anytime. Whoa, bummer!*"

Yes something bad can happen anytime and yes it can be a bummer, unless that little girl has a person on the inside looking out for her. Let me explain.

In the first 4 chapters of Romans, Paul explained why we all needed to accept God's gracious offer of salvation by faith, because we could never earn it any other way: *The one who is righteous will live by faith* (Romans 1:17). And today especially I want to again point out that it was this very thought, indeed all of the truths found in the Book of Romans that birthed a transformation in Martin Luther's heart and eventually sparked the entire Reformation. In a world burdened by sin and feeling distant from God – like ours today – this is this truth that still sets us free: *The one who is righteous will live by faith*.

Then beginning with chapter 5, Paul shifted to the positive side of his argument, listing out the benefits of our living by faith. You have seen this list before but here it is again.

We are justified by God's grace as a gift (3:23) we have peace with God (5:1) we are reconciled to God we will be saved by Christ's life (5:10-11)

Then we reached chapter 8 and Paul began explaining the specific benefits from having God's Spirit living inside us, especially in this suffering world in which we must continue to live *while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies* (8:23).

Have you ever thought about what it means for you to have God's Spirit actually living with you – within you – to have a person on the inside?

"A person on the inside," has almost become a cliché from its overuse in way too many spy or cops-n-robber movies. "A person on the inside" means that you've got some

kind of connection behind the scene, within the company; someone hidden within the system that can give you the winning edge in whatever caper you intend to pull off. Perhaps they will unlock just the right doors or pass along the secret information you are searching for. Perhaps they'll meet you in some dark location and lead you right to the prize. Clichéd or not, that is exactly the benefit we get when we have God's Spirit living within us; our person in the inside. Here's another list just from chapter 8:

With the Spirit living inside us (chapter 8)

1. We are no longer condemned (vs.1)
2. We are set free from slavery to our earthly desires (vs.9)
3. We are led by the Spirit to live as children of God (vs.11)
4. The Spirit directs our thoughts towards God (vs. 16)
5. The Spirit gives us hope in suffering (vs. 23-24)

and

With the Spirit living inside us

6. The Spirit prays for us according to God's will (vs. 26-27)
7. God's Spirit works to bring good out of all situations (vs. 28)

Which is where we are today. Here are perhaps two of the most amazing statements Paul makes, each one deserving of our full attention. Let's take a closer look at what these two verses are promising and not promising us. First, here are verses 26-27

The Spirit helps us in our weakness;
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,
but that very **Spirit intercedes [for us]** (vs.26)

Wow, my thinking about this verse has truly changed. I used to think that this verse meant when we were confused about a situation and perhaps seeking God's guidance, that the Spirit – knowing the situation better than us - could tell God what we really need to have happen. And perhaps that is still true. But now I think this verse means much more than just guidance upon request.

Remember, that having saved us and adopted us as His children, God's next purpose for our lives is to transform us into what God's children should look like, think like, and be doing; The best example of which is His own son Jesus, who indeed serves as the model for what God wants us to become. It's not mere wishful thinking when our Bible

tells us "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). That is the direction that God's indwelling Holy Spirit – our person on the inside – is trying to lead us.

The Spirit knows where we need to be going. The Spirit knows what doors need to be opened for us. The Spirit passes along the secret knowledge of God that can help us win in life; its secret knowledge because the fallen world, in rejecting God, thinks such ideas as grace and forgiveness and sacrificial love – those very things which save us – as foolishness.

In another letter Paul described how the fallen world reacts to the work of God's Spirit:

Those who are unspiritual
do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit,
for they are foolishness to them,
and they are unable to understand them
because they are discerned spiritually.
(1 Corinthians 2.14).

This then is a good description of those who have not become God's children, but it is also a rather good description of how we begin when we are first born into God's family. The Bible describes us "new born babies" needing to be suckled on God's word; as "children tossed about in the waves" of life desperately needing to grow up; to become like Jesus (1 Peter 2:2, Ephesians 4:14-16). Which is exactly why the Spirit comes into our life, our person on the inside is here to help us grow from being a mere child of God into a mature Disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit helps us in our weakness;
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,
but that very **Spirit intercedes [for us]** (vs.26)

That's what Paul is referring to when he says "the Spirit helps us **in our weakness, [because] we don't know ... how we ought to pray.** Immediately after being re-birthed into God's family we are basically still self-centered worldly infants and our prayers are self-centered worldly prayers ...

*Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz,
my neighbors drive Porches I must make amends. ...*

So our person on the inside, takes a look around within our life and begins praying to God on our behalf – we don't know what we should be asking for, but God's Spirit living within does, and that Spirit begins praying to the Father for us. And opening the right

doors for us and attempting to lead us down right paths. As the psalmist declared so long ago: The Lord is my shepherd, He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Psalm 23). That's what the Spirit is doing within our lives.

And God, who searches the heart,
knows what is the mind of the Spirit,
because the **Spirit intercedes for [for us]**
according to the will of God. (vs. 27)

But notice that there is one more specific detail in this verse of how the Spirit "intercedes" (prays) in our behalf. The Spirit is not only praying for and leading us to maturity. The Spirit and the Father (and the son!) are so intimately connected that they are all following the same plan, they are on the same page with regards to our life. The Spirit knows what God's will for our life is. The Spirit knows where God would have us be. And so that is where all three of them – Father, Son & Spirit – are working to lead us.

In the conclusion of this letter, Paul will write:

I appeal to you in view of what God has done for you
... to **sacrificially** present your lives back to God
to not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,
so that you may discern what is the will of God
— what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

See that reference again to the "will of God."- that which is good, acceptable, and perfect. **God's first will for us is that we might be saved.** Some people asked Jesus how they might do the "works of God," and he replied "*this is the work of God, that you believe on the one whom He has sent*" (John 6:29). But once we are in the family, **God's will for us is that we "be conformed to the image of his son,"** which we will talk about next week (8:29). **For right now it is sufficient for you to realize that your person on the inside is actually a team effort working to grow you up according to God's will for your life.** And whether or not you know it, the Spirit knows what God wants you to be ... and that's what the Spirit is praying and working towards.

Which brings us to this second amazing and often misunderstood verse.

We know that all things work together for good
for those **who love God,**
who are called **according to his purpose.** (vs. 28)

Pastor Joseph M. Stowell tells a story about his childhood. "Growing up in Hackensack, N.J., just across the George Washington Bridge from New York City, provided a variety of experiences for me. One was going to school with some of the rough kids from the neighboring town of South Hackensack. I recall one afternoon, playfully sparring with one of the southside guys and having his punch actually land on my face. The blow jarred one of my front teeth loose. Thankfully, the dentist was able to anchor the tooth again, and I didn't lose it. In fact, I was better off--the tooth had always been crooked, so the dentist straightened it as he worked. Sometimes the blows of life have a way of taking something crooked and making it straight." (<http://www.irsweb.com/>)

We are told that God causes ALL THINGS to work together for good. That doesn't mean that all things happening in our life will be good, but that God will use even bad situations in our life to bring about something good. As a cook combines multiple ingredients to make a tasty dish of food, so God mixes together the circumstances of our life in such a way to ultimately bring us, or another, something good. In the context of Paul's letter then, "all things" includes all the trials and tribulations we deal with in life. It also included all the persecutions we face as a result of our faith.

We have some examples of this principle in scripture. How terrible it would be to be sold into slavery by your own brothers? Or thrown into prison – with no hope of parole – for a crime you were completely innocent of? Both of these things happened to one man, Joseph son of Jacob (in the bible). Later on in his life when circumstances had brought Joseph to the place God intended him to be, when Joseph was now ruling as Pharaoh's second in command and as the savior of all Egypt, Joseph's brothers worried he might now seek revenge against them. But instead, Joseph told them, *Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today* (Genesis 50:20).

And when the early church was being persecuted, it seemed like a bad thing, but the good that came out of it was that it made the Christians leave Jerusalem and take the gospel to other parts of the world. Acts 8:4 states, *"But the believers who had fled Jerusalem went everywhere preaching the Good News about Jesus."*

So, whatever bad situations we may be facing in life, God promises that He will bring good out of the situation whether for us or for others; Joseph spent close to twenty years as a slave and a prisoner before being promoted to become Egypt's savior.

Also notice that this promise of “working all things for good” isn’t for everybody. **The good that comes out of any circumstance is only for those, “who love God and who are called according to His purpose.”**

So there are definite limits to God’s working in people’s lives for their good. If you are not a child of God, if you still live in rebellion and enmity with God, the only thing you can expect from Him is judgment and condemnation (Romans 2:5, Hebrews 10:26-31).

But, on the other even though you are among those who “love God,” the good that may come out of your circumstance might be in your spiritual maturity and have nothing to do with your physical comfort.

- So you lose your high-paying job and a well meaning friend says don’t worry God must have a better job for you – “*because all things work together for good*” – but what if you never get a better job, because God wants to free you up from your idolatry towards money and success and help you learn to be more reliant on Him for a daily basis.
- Or perhaps the boyfriend/girlfriend of your dreams leaves you ... and you never find anyone else because God wants to live if life singularly focused on ministry in His service

Thus the “Good” that God intends for you may not feel like anything you would have considered good.

And also the good coming out of those situations is what fulfills God’s will, not necessarily for you personally but for the everyone involved in the situation: many Christians have been tortured and killed in horrendous ways – remember the word “martyr” means witness; these martyrs would not have considered any of the circumstances of their deaths personally good – and the good they received would have come in the next life with the cessation of their pain and suffering.

The good that came out of Paul and Silas’ illegal beating in Philippi was that their jailor became a believer. I am sure that, had they been asked, Paul and Silas would have passed on the beating

The good that came out of the death of those five missionaries who were killed by the Ecuadorian tribe they had come to Christianize was that their one of their widows, Elizabeth Elliot came back and by her forgiveness towards her husband’s murderers, accomplished what they had originally set out to do.

So the ultimate good that can come out of any situation is first that God might be glorified. Your faithful life and death while battling cancer – may be the

most powerful witness of your entire life which leads countless numbers of people back to God. This was the case of my teenage friend Bruce Banta, whose never failing faith & joy in the midst of painful cancer that led to his death - at age 18 - nevertheless built up the faith of all who knew him.

God's promise then to bring good out of every situation for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose, does not mean you will necessarily survive or in any other way benefit from a particular bad situation.

Here is your take-home for today, from these two verses

- First that God's indwelling Holy Spirit will be praying for you and guiding you into a life that conforms to God's will for you.
- And while you may not know the particulars of God's will, you can know that for everyone of us it is that we grow to become more and more like God's son, Jesus Christ.
- So that the name you wear, "Christian," might be more true of you as a person than just as a label: you are becoming a little Christ.

Secondly the verse that promises God will work to bring about good – “essentially promises that nothing will touch your life that is not under the control and direction of your Loving heavenly Father. Everything you do and say, everything people do to you or say about you, every experience you will ever have – all are sovereignty used by God for your good; even though you may never understand, in this life, how” (NIV Application Commentary, Romans. Douglas Moo. Page 278).

So think on this: *God is almost intolerably careless about crosses and swords, arenas and scaffolds, about all the "evils" and all the "plagues." ... His caring doesn't mean that he goes in for upholstery* (Paul Scherer). This is why we live by faith.

Like those people talking to Jesus, have you been longing, but not knowing how to do the work of God?

Do you want to live in a close redeemed relationship with the One who both created and deeply loves you?

Then like Martin Luther and countless numbers both before and after him, you need to come to God in faith and pray “Lord save me... a sinner.”

And whether or not you feel anything, a miracle will happen in your life: you will be spiritually born anew, forgiven and washed clean by Christ's sacrificial love, adopted into God's forever family, and you will get your very own person on the inside!