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ROMANS 8:18-39 (28) = GOD (His purposes with our trials/suffering)

#SCRIPTURE READING: Rom 8:18-39 (26-28), Matt 20:17-19, Lev 16:1-34

#SERMON=INTRODUCTION: A forester was going through a part of a plantation soon to be cut down. He noticed a mother bird starting to build a nest. He knew her chicks would hatch when the trees were to be cut down - and they'd probably die. So he devised a plan... Each day he went to that tree and shook it until the mother bird left to try and build her nest in another tree. *Each day the mom flew around, wondering: "What's up with this guy harassing me so much?"* The forester did this day-after-day, tree-after-tree - until she finally built her nest on the rocks of a cliff...

+TRANSITION: Dear B/S in CJ, "harassment" was the forester's way of keeping the bird and her chicks safe. *While it was happening, nothing made sense to the bird. In fact - there's a very good possibility that she never realised he saved her&her family's lives...* May I suggest that what we think is "trouble" may very well be God's way of ultimately protecting us?..

+EXEGESIS&APPLICATION: To fully get our heads around **ROM 8:28**, we must remind each other (1) that this promise applies only to Christians/God's children ("...to those who love God... who are called according to His purposes."), (2) of the unshakable belief that God loves us=that He is for His children & not against us! We know this by (1stly) looking at the cross and Scripture: "He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (ROM 8:32) / "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield: The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." (PS 84:11) Can you believe it? God nailed His Son to the cross and punished Him for our sin, *as if He committed them.* (COL 2:14) Then *He took Jesus' righteousness and placed it on us.* (2 COR 5:21) And finally *He adopted us as His children.* (JOHN 1:12) That is undeniable proof of absolute/unconditional love! Bride of JC, God is indeed Love (1 JOHN 4:8): *The cross proves it. ROM 8:1 affirms it. And the Holy Spirit in us settles it.* (ROM 8:16) **Very NB:** In the light of this, we understand /interpret what happens to us in terms of God's Love. We understand circumstances in light of Who He is, rather than understanding God in the light of circumstances. Rephrase: I don't know why God is allowing this hardship into my life, *but this I do know: Because He's allowed it, He must be doing something that'll result in my good - otherwise He wouldn't..*

*NB: You can't understand 8:28 without 8:26-27, the Holy Spirit interceding for Christians, according to the Father's will. That means **8:28 is God's answer to what the Spirit prays!** Grammatically God is the subject of 8:28 - not "...all things work together..." Commentators write that **8:28 is most accurately translated** from the original Greek as the NASB has it: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good..." Things don't just work out for the better/good because a person is a Christian - that isn't what Paul meant. *God makes things work out for the Christian's good. God is the One Who is active in the events, so that we are ultimately blessed.*

*Let's continue, how does it work: *Is it possible for God to make even evil things bring about a good result?* Can God cause things that are bad to be/become good? Yes, indeed - in God's Presence bad/hard/difficult events can be evil and good at the same time. In fact, *sometimes evil is necessary for a greater good.* What we endure can not be good in/by itself - but the result can be good. At times good will not come about, were it not for the evil we had to endure.

~ (1) Joseph in the OT: He was sold into slavery twice... falsely accused of rape... thrown into prison... ignored for years. For 17 years (as far as we know), God didn't explain to him why these things had happened. **But it was because of these things - and only by them happening - that Israel was preserved. And as a result we are saved!** (GEN 50:20)

~ (2) Jesus in the NT: ***Because it was God's will*** for Judas to betray Jesus, for Him to be unlawfully arrested, falsely accused of crimes, Barabbas released, Herod & Pontius Pilate to give their decrees, the beatings - and then Jesus' crucifixion, ***that salvation came about***. Only in retrospect were those understood. (ACTS 4:27-28)

*Dear B/S, ***our attitude reveals our heart***. If/When we are frustrated with our lives, (with) what is happening, the circumstances we are in - ***if so, it means we don't understand/believe God***. We don't grasp ROM 8:28. Those who bemoan their lot in life, play martyr & find fault with others first, ***are not living by faith nor do they believe God is keeping His promise in 8:28***.

When enduring challenging situations, we have to think Biblically. B/S, does our "theology" allow room for those things that don't make sense? ***"For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure/and I will accomplish all My purpose'..."***(ISAI 46:9b-10)/***"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways", says the Lord, 'for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"*** (ISAI 55:8-9) Bottomline - we can't think like God thinks. ***We must learn to trust Him in all things. (PROV 3:5)*** Words of song (*New Wine*) by Brooke Ligertwood (Hillsong): ***"So I yield to You, and to Your careful hand, when I trust You, I don't need to understand, make me Your vessel, make me an offering, make me whatever You want me to be..."***

We don't have the ability, wisdom or knowledge to deem anything as bad in the moment. We don't know what God is in the process of bringing about. We mustn't presume upon God's choices to bring about His glory through His sovereign actions. God is the ultimate Forester!

*Before we conclude, let's look at the end of Jesus' life. ***The perception is that our Messiah's death happened through unholy means - evil men, bribery, treachery, brutality and murder***. And yet, B/S, in ancient Israel - ***who were the ones ordained by God to offer up the sacrifices? The priesthood = the sons of Aaron***. And ***who were the key people involved in delivering Messiah to His death? The Sanhedrin*** - led by the high priest and the chief priests of the temple = ***the sons of Aaron***. ***Why were they so obsessed with Him and His death? They were the priests and He was the Lamb/Sacrifice***. So they were the ones to initiate His death. ***It was their ministry/calling to offer up the sacrifice; only they could deliver the Lamb of God to His death...*** We perceive their actions as pure evil - and it was! Their motives & actions were corrupt! ***And yet, through their actions came salvation...***

+**CONCLUSION**: The world is filled with evil, the imperfect & the wrong. But God causes all these things to work together for the good, the holy and the perfect - also in our lives as His Bride. ***The tears, the crises, the heartbreaks, the evil and all the wrong will - eventually - all become "the priests off the offering" to fulfill the sacred purposes and blessings God has ordained for our lives...*** What or who in this world is against you or working for evil?.. ***Commit it to God. And give thanks beforehand that He will turn it for the good...*** Amen & amen!