Introduction

In Romans chapter 8, we find the Apostle Paul making an interesting statement in the 28th verse. As with any other scripture, we find various opinions pertaining to its meaning. It is not enough to just have one person's opinion; we must find exactly what Paul meant as he was writing through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Please note that this is not an attempt to “explain away” any verse. However, it is the purpose of this study to investigate the flowing context and theme of Romans chapter 8, the definitions of key words in verse 28, and then build a logical conclusion based upon the findings.

Context and Theme of Romans chapter 8

Before examining the context of our specified verse, we must learn one rule of interpreting an Epistle. In the New Testament, an Epistle is a letter written by an inspired writer to a church, often times containing doctrine, encouragements, exhortations and admonishments, etc. It is important to keep in mind that these epistles were not written in chapter/verse outline form, but were written as any letter we would write to someone today. These letters were in paragraph form as a flowing thought or theme from sentence to sentence. Reading and interpreting an Epistle should not be done the same way as reading a book like Psalms or Proverbs. Proverbs is an inspired collection of admonishments and exhortations not necessarily connected by a flowing context or theme. It is oftentimes easy to read one proverb outside of its context and get the writer’s intended meaning. However, with an epistle, this is not the case. One can hardly read one verse out of a chapter without also reading the entire context and still expect to understand the writer’s intended meaning. Keeping this in mind will remind us to examine the flow of context leading up to and following Romans 8:28.

In Romans chapter 7, Paul greatly emphasizes the dual nature of a born again child of God. Paul himself readily admits his own sinfulness and failure to do even the good things he so desires to do (ch. 7 v. 15-23). In verse 24, Paul raises a question that he uses to transition to his
next line of thought, which we read as follows:

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Paul has just asked a very vital question, a question to which the answer is often desired by God’s children after their new birth. Often when we realize that we are sinners and are convicted by our own sins, this question is on our mind. Who shall deliver me? Paul does not leave us “hanging” long. He promptly answers in verse 25:

“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Paul then begins explaining in verse 1 of chapter 8 that there is now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. What does it mean to walk after the Spirit? Whatever this condition is, it described those who have no condemnation. Paul gives us our definition for “those who walk after the Spirit” in verse 9:

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

Those who have been born of the Spirit are now no longer “in the flesh,” so to speak. Please keep in mind the chapter leading up to this lesson. Paul has just described his dual nature and the fact that he is still a sinner even after being born again. He is not saying that after the new birth, God’s children are incapable of sinning, but that they also have a new Spiritual nature about them as well. He goes on to instruct them to mortify (kill) the deeds of the body (their flesh and its nature).

In verse 16 Paul begins a thought that flows from verse 16 all the way to verse 30. This thought begins in verse 16 with the statement that after regeneration, the Holy Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God. Every sentence from this point on to verse 30 begins with a connective word. To illustrate this, we will list each verse number with the first word in the verse.
Verse 16 The (Spirit beareth witness…)
Verse 17 And…
Verse 18 For…
Verse 19 For…
Verse 20 For…
Verse 21 Because…
Verse 22 For…
Verse 23 And…
Verse 24 For…
Verse 25 But…
Verse 26 Likewise…
Verse 27 And…
Verse 28 And…
Verse 29 For…
Verse 30 Moreover… (concluding sentence in line of thought)

The reason for pointing all that out is simply this: Each verse in this context is attached, the one to the other. Paul would certainly not throw a random comment out in the middle of a line of thought. Whatever verse 28 means, its meaning will lie within the boundaries of the context in which Paul is writing.

Now, I would like to carefully notice the verses leading up to verse 28, verses 26 and 27. In verses 26 and 27, Paul writes a very comforting thought to the Roman brethren. He instructs them, and us, that the Holy Spirit is making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. He also says that the Father (He who searcheth the hearts) knows the mind of the Spirit. Then he tells us that the Spirit maketh intercession according to the will of God. Paul is specifically and graphically describing a process in which things work together for good. God the Spirit actively intercedes for us to the Father, who hears the Spirit, who does all this according to the Will of God. They work together in PERFECT harmony. Thus we have verse 28, stating that “All things" work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. What are those “all things” Paul mentions? We will make our conclusion after a word study, but first let us finish his line of thought. In verses 29 and 30 Paul defines what it means to be “called according to His purpose.” Those who are called according to His purpose are foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. These are the same individuals who early on in the chapter have no condemnation and are debtors to mortify the deeds of the body. These are the same individuals who the Spirit makes intercession for according to the will of God. Paul then finishes his thought with the preservation of God’s children from any imaginable fear in verses 33-39.
I would like to point out for the sake of encouraging thought before our word study, that Paul uses this expression “all things” again in this chapter, in verse 32. Verse 32 appears as follows:

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Let us examine and meditate aloud about the all things in verse 32. Do we really get “all things” freely? Do we? If I were to go to a Lamborghini dealership and tell them that God has promised to give me all things FREELY, would they give me the keys to a brand new Murcielago? After all, it says “all things” doesn’t it? Perhaps I should discontinue payment on my mortgage using the excuse that God has promised me all things freely. Does “all things” in verse 32 here mean all things in general? Of course not, to believe that would be insane. It is equally insane to believe that the all things of verse 28 means all things. All things must be defined by the context in which it appears! As Elder Sonny Pyles says, “I do not think I need to further illustrate this thought to intelligent people.”

Word Study of Romans Chapter 8 Verse 28
Below I will supply a breakdown of the Greek words Romans 8:28 was translated from with their definition number from Strong’s Concordance. I do feel that the King James Version is sufficient and totally adequate for English speaking disciples in 2007. However, it is my goal to totally and fully investigate this verse.


I would like to spend some time discussing the definitions to the words that make up the phrase “We know that all things work together.” This phrase is translated from three Greek words, eido, pas, and sunergeo. Below are the definitions provided from www.blueletterbible.org.

We Know

Let us take a moment to examine the Greek word translated into “We know.”
eido {i'-do} or oida {oy'-da}
verb
1) to see
   a) to perceive with the eyes
   b) to perceive by any of the senses
   c) to perceive, notice, discern, discover
   d) to see
      1) i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything
      2) to pay attention, observe
      3) to see about something
         a) i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it
         4) to inspect, examine
      5) to look at, behold
      e) to experience any state or condition
      f) to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit
2) to know
   a) to know of anything
   b) to know, i.e. get knowledge of, understand, perceive
      1) of any fact
      2) the force and meaning of something which has definite meaning
      3) to know how, to be skilled in
      c) to have regard for one, cherish, pay attention to (1Th. 5:12)

This word obviously is describing something that we can literally SEE, KNOW, or COMPREHEND. When Paul, in Romans 8:28 says “and we know…” he is implying this is something that we can easily know and comprehend. This word eido rules out anything not comprehendlible. In other words, if you have grievous things happen to you in your life and you just cannot comprehend how those things are working for your good, they are probably not. Paul eliminates those things. Whatever the “all things” are, they are things WE KNOW.

All things

Paul chose a very common adjective to convey his thought which we translate “all things.” It is the Greek word pas. This word occurs 1243 times in the New Testament and is translated a variety of ways. Below is each different expression this one word is translated into in the New Testament:
This word has a very vast usage throughout the New Testament. Below is a quote by Charles Spurgeon from a sermon on the subject of particular redemption.

“’the whole world has gone after him’ Did all the world go after Christ? ‘then went all Judea, and were baptized of him in Jordan.’ Was all Judea, or all Jerusalem, baptized in Jordan? ‘Ye are of God, little children’, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one’. Does the whole world there mean everybody? The words ‘world’ and ‘all’ are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture, and it is very rarely the ‘all’ means all persons, taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed some of all sorts -- some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor, and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile ...

C.H. Spurgeon from a sermon on Particular Redemption

In scripture, the word “all” must be defined by its context. Back to our study verse and the context in which it is found, what is taking place within the defined context of Romans chapter 8 that ALL of which would work for our good? Perhaps we should say after continuing our study to the phrase “work together.”

Work Together
The expression “work together” comes from a rather interesting Greek word. This word should sound very familiar to you, in that it is very similar to an English word used today. This phrase is translated from the Greek word “sunergeo.” This is the Greek word from which our English word synergize is derived. We know what takes place in a synergism don't we? Webster's 2007 defines synergize as the following:

*to cooperate with another or others, esp. to remedy something*

This is obviously very much like our expression “work together” as found in Romans 8:28. Something surely is working together. Let us examine the definition of sunergeo:

sunergeo
verb
1) to work together, help in work, be partner in labour
2) to put forth power together with and thereby to assist

**Good and Evil: Can Opposites Attract?**

Let me present a question to you. Do good and evil synergize or work together for a common purpose? Can we find the answer to that question in scripture? Let us use God's inspired scripture to answer that question.

2 Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

John 1:5 *And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

Light and Darkness (Good and Evil) have no fellowship, nor communion. Obviously they cannot synergize or work together. Darkness cannot even comprehend light. Light literally extinguishes darkness. For a simple demonstration of this, go into a dark room and turn on the light. The darkness cannot exist in the presence of light.
James 1:17 *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Prior to this verse, James tells us that God will NEVER tempt man (tempt here means to solicit with sin). Then James tells us that EVERY good and perfect gift is from God. Further, James tells us that with God, there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. That implies a divine consistency in God’s nature. God is good, wickedness is NOT of God, period. Further into the context James tell us in verse 19: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

**The answer to our question, “do good and evil synergize or work together for a common purpose,” is a resounding NO!**

**Our Conclusion**

Now back to our study verse, Romans 8:28. Did we learn of anything in Romans chapter 8 leading up to this verse that is comprehensible to believe is totally and wholly working together as partners for our good? YES! Think back to the context of our text. Paul had just stated that the Holy Spirit was making intercession for us, that the Father was hearing the Spirit, and that the Spirit’s intercession was according to the will of God. There is a synergism there in the Godhead working for our good. Paul is simply comforting the reader of the Roman letter that the Spirit is working together with the Father with “groanings which cannot be uttered” for YOUR GOOD. This interpretation of Romans 8:28 is in no way an attempt to “explain away” the text. It is simply an attempt to EXPLAIN the text based on the definitions of words in the verse, and the context of the chapter the verse appears in. I realize that not everyone will agree with this opinion. Even so, it must be admitted that it flows perfectly with the context and definitions of the words Paul wrote while remaining true to the character and nature of Almighty God.

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