

Good morning. My name is Ryan Kucera. I'm the student minister here at our Dallas campus. So if you don't know what student ministry looks like at the Village, it's for grades 6-12. So that's the world that I find myself in in this season, walking alongside middle school and high school students and their families. I absolutely love it. I have a heart that burns for Christ and breaks to see young people fall in love with Him and run hard after him. So I love my role here at the church. I have been on staff here at the Village for about three years, and I've been at this campus for almost two years. I love this campus, and it has been a fun ride for me here getting to serve under our campus pastor Steve Hardin and serve alongside the other staff members the Lord has placed down here. So I love this campus, and I'm excited about what God is doing and has been doing in this campus, bringing glory to His name through lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm just privileged, humbled and excited to get to preach the word of God to you this morning.

So this morning, I want us to read through Romans 8:28-29, I'm going to pray and then I'm going to ask God to give us eyes to see Him rightly in the Scriptures and hearts that feel deeply about what we see. So let's look at Romans 8:28-29. The apostle Paul says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for Your Word this morning. I thank You that it is sharp, that it pierces and that it gives us something to stand on in difficult circumstances or in seasons of life that make no sense to us. Father, Your Word gives us something to stand on because it's going to point us to Your Son Jesus Christ, who is our Rock to stand on in all seasons of life. So God, I pray Your Spirit would blow through here powerfully the next few minutes, that You would minister to our hearts, that You would encourage and strengthen us this morning where we need to be encouraged and strengthened, that You would sharpen and convict us and that You would be honored and glorified in this time. Be on display in this place. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

So I've got to tell you right out of the gate this morning that I have probably bitten off more than I can chew coming out of this passage. If you know your Bible well, you know that Romans 8 is one of the deepest, most profound, richest chapters, not just in the New Testament, but really in the entirety of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. So you can't read Romans 8 without seeing a few things. The first thing you're going to see is the sovereignty of God Almighty, particularly this sovereign love, guidance and control from God to us as believers in Jesus Christ. So I think this passage is going to force us this morning to answer a few questions. The first one is this. Do we see the sovereignty of God at the ground level of what you and I call everyday life? If we do see it, what does that do to us as men and women who, by all the grace of God at work within us, are striving to grow in relationship with God? How does that change us? How does seeing God rightly here change the way we live our lives?

So that's where we're headed this morning. We're really just going to drill down in these two verses. Romans was written by the apostle Paul, and a theme we're going to see throughout the life and ministry of Paul is this overwhelming confidence in God. He is not at all confident in himself, but he is boastful about God the Father, about Jesus Christ and about the cross of Christ. Time and time again, we see this confidence in the life and ministry of Paul. Here right out of the gate in this verse, we're going to see some of that confidence. Let's look at verse 28. Paul starts out saying, "And we know. . ." Notice Paul doesn't say here, "we hope" or "we think" or "it would be nice" here. No, he says, "We know." And

the reason Paul says this is he wants us to see that what he's about to say is solid and it's something that we can stand on. He's saying, "There's certainty to this promise." What's the promise? Let's keep going, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." So the promise is that the God of the universe works all things together for good. For who? That's the next question we have to answer. Paul says it's for those who love God and those who are called according to His purpose. It's really important that we see here that Paul is not describing two different people. He's saying, "Those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose." He's saying, "If you are called by God Almighty, you will love God Almighty. When God calls a child to Himself, He will place within that child a love and an affection for Him." So this promise that God works all things together for good is written to the believer in Jesus Christ. So this is a promise for you to stand on. If you're in here this morning and you would say, "I'm not a believer in Jesus Christ. I haven't trusted, by grace, through faith, in the Son of God," we want to invite you to peek in to the God of the Scriptures this morning. This is showing that, for whatever reason, the God of the universe has a special, peculiar affection for an undeserving people. So please, see the God of the Bible this morning. This is who He is. So this promise for the believer, that God works all things together for good, means that the God of the heavens is sovereignly orchestrating and weaving the daily events and circumstances of our lives for good. Think about the scope of that promise. It's mind-boggling if you start to think about it. He says, "All things." So it's not just good things when we're in a season of prosperity, we're experiencing the Lord's favor or we're reaping a harvest. No, he says, "All things." So that includes bad things. That includes sufferings, trials, tribulations, persecutions, difficult circumstances, loss, trauma and prolonged seasons of waiting on the Lord. He says, "God works everything together for good for His people, for His children." I don't know about you, but sometimes it's easy for me to see this big, sovereign, good God in the pages of Scripture and have trouble linking that to the reality of my everyday life. If we were honest this morning, sometimes we have absolutely no idea what God is up to and how He is going to work our present circumstances for good. We just don't know. When we don't know, we start to unravel. If we don't know where this is going, if we don't know how this turns out for good, we start to just unravel. We get ruled by negative thinking and negative emotions, and we fall into this discouragement, doubt or anger and we don't know the Lord is up to.

For me, the first time I really hit a season of life like this where I had absolutely no idea what God was up to in my life and how He was going to work this circumstance out for good was when I was in college. When I was working on my undergrad, I had the opportunity to play soccer at the university I attended. I was never the best athlete growing up. I always had to work and train really hard to keep up with the rest of the pack, and college was no different for me. So I'm training like crazy. I'm up early in the morning running, I'm going to practice, I'm staying after practice to get in some more reps and after I'm done with that I'm headed to the gym to go train some more. I start to become totally consumed with this lifestyle of wanting to be a good soccer player. I envisioned myself as the American equivalent to David Beckham. I wanted to be like Beckham and play soccer like he did. The reality is that I really didn't resemble David Beckham on the soccer field at all. The only thing that maybe looked like Beckham on the soccer field was my fauxhawk. So I couldn't bend it like Beckham. The coach knew I really wasn't that good, so he was like, "Hey, you can play defense, and you just keep working hard this year." So I'm totally consumed with playing soccer this season. Before I went off to college, I was a guy who grew up in church. The church I attended was three miles from this campus. I went to that church for eighteen years every week. I go off to college and I want to have nothing to do with the church. I walked away from the church. My excuse, my free pass was that I was always traveling with the soccer team on the weekends and couldn't go to church on Sunday. So I've got an excuse, right? Well my sophomore year rolls around. It's a really good season for our team. It's the best season in school history. It was a good year for me cheering on the team from the sidelines. We made it to the national tournament where we had a good showing. So I'm stoked about next year, because next year is going to be my year. So we hit the off season, a couple months pass and our athletic director calls a meeting. He says, "I want all players and coaching staff to show up. We've got some stuff we need to talk about." So we're thinking, "Okay cool. We just had a great season. This guy is about to throw us some scholarship money. Maybe

we're going to get some new uniforms and get sponsored by Adidas or something." We're feeling that this meeting is going to be good. And he walks in the room and says, "I'm going to read you a prepared statement, and we're going to take some questions." There are twenty-two guys in this room, and we have no idea what's going on. He gets up, proceeds to read us a letter that says, "For a number of different reasons, the faculty, administration and president of the university have decided to terminate the men's soccer program effective immediately. The coaching staff is disbanded, the players are disbanded and the program is cut." And for a group of twenty-two young guys, we were absolutely floored by this. My buddies had flown from around the country, had come to this city to play soccer at this school and we walked out of there angry, confused and bitter going, "What in the world is going on?" And I was one of those guys. So as the days and weeks went on, I didn't have an excuse not to go to church anymore. I was done playing soccer. All my friends got to transfer because they were good enough to go play at other schools, but I was stuck where I was. So I land a few months later at the Village Church in Highland Village, Texas as a beat up, broken, prideful, confused college student. I remember sitting week in and week out in the back of that church, and this church became a place for me to heal, for me to serve and for me to learn what Jesus and the gospel was all about. Because I was a guy who could articulate the gospel to you, but I didn't experience the joy of living by it. So I had no idea what God was up to in that season and how He's going to work it out for good, but I do know this. I knew that the sovereign God of the heavens had ripped this idol from me, and it forever altered the course of my life. And I didn't know how He was going to work this out for good or what He was up to.

I like what John Piper says about the sovereignty of God. He says, "Whenever God is doing one thing, He's doing a million things." There's truth to that. We see just a little picture of what God is up to, and He's up to something on so much larger a scale. So we shouldn't be surprised when we don't know what He's doing. We shouldn't be surprised that God, who is an infinite being that we can't see with our eyes or touch with our hands, is up to something and we don't know what that something is or how we fit into it. His Word tells us this is the God that He is. Isaiah 55:8-9 says "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares 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." He's up to something so much bigger. We can't get our heads around it, and that's okay.

So today, this morning, as we lay our lives over the promise of this verse for us as believers in Jesus Christ that God is big, God is sovereign, He is good and He does good in our lives, I think it's going to force us to look in the mirror, into our own hearts, our own souls and our own practices and say, "Do we really live like this?" I don't know about you, but more times I would care to admit, my mindset and my behavior in this season looks a lot more like Old Testament Israel grumbling and complaining when God acts than the rejoicing in all circumstances New Testament believer I've been called to be. And I hate that disconnect. I hate it. I don't think I'm alone here. There is this disconnect between what we say we believe about the God of the Scriptures and how that plays itself out in everyday life.

I think this disconnect grieves heart of God for a few different reasons. First, we're just not seeing God rightly, and it's not glorifying to Him. Second, it's not edifying to His church. It's not encouraging in the life and heart of the church here. And then third, as God sends us out into the world, it's not making God look big to a fallen, dying world that is desperately searching everywhere for a Savior bigger than their Monday morning problems. It's not making Him look big. Do you know what makes God look big here in the heart and life of the church? It's when we, as a people of God, rally together and we collectively have a big, high, right view of God and our lives testify to it, our lips proclaim it. That is encouraging, edifying and strengthening to the church. And when God sends us out into the world, it's the same thing. They look at our lives and our coworkers, our neighbors, our friends go, "You should not be hopeful right now. You should not be steadfast. Nothing in your life is going well." And in that moment, we look at them and say, "No, I am because my God is good and does good regardless of what my circumstances say." And that drives them crazy, right? It's like, "How do you know that? You shouldn't be happy. You hate your job. Your boss is a jerk. You just got laid off. Your kids

are going crazy. Your marriage is on the rocks. You need more money to provide for your family." And all of this stuff is legitimate, right? A lot of it can be. And they're confused that you can say, "My God is good and He does good."

How do you answer that? We take them to Romans 8:31-32. Paul says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" So in that moment, we remember and preach to a dying world that, over two thousand years ago, God the Father sent His only Son into the world to be slaughtered on a tree for our sins. That's how we know God is good, that's how we know God is for us and that's what we've got to cling to. Our mindset and behavior in this season will let us know and the world know if we've built our lives on a rock-solid, never changing gospel or if we've really just built it upon fleeting circumstances and seasons that are always changing. So we've got to get this. We've got to cling to this. We've got to build our lives on it.

Let's finish verse 28. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." So we've got to answer the question: what is our ultimate good here and what's God's purpose? Look at verse 29. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." This word "foreknew" means "fore loved." Again, it's God's special, peculiar, covenantal love for His children. So he says that God loved us so much that He predestined before the foundation of the world that we would be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. So our good and God's purpose in our life is this – conformity to Jesus, that we would be molded, shaped and chiseled into a living picture of Jesus Christ. Paul is saying here that God is about our sanctification. That's what this is. This is His process of us growing in holiness, becoming more and more like Jesus. It's very important that we see that this is the destination that our lives are moving towards, from the moment we're converted to Christ to the moment we'll appear before Him in glory. And this right here where you and I find ourselves, this is the track our lives are running on. We've got to see that. This is God's purpose. This is God's will. He loved us before the foundation of the world, and He predestined that we would look like His Son. That's what He's up to. And we want to know what He's up to, right? We want to know what His will is. We want to know what His purpose is. It's a question you hear from believers all the time. "What's God's will for my life?"

There is a conversation I have with our high school students a lot here, particularly Juniors and Seniors. They'll come to me and say, "Hey Ryan, I'm getting ready to go off to college. I've narrowed down my choices to these few schools, and I really want to go to the school that is God's will for me to attend. I don't want to be outside the will of God. I want to go to the school He wants me at." I love that that's their heart, and I love walking with them in this. So I'll say, "Okay, that's awesome. Why don't you grab your Bible right there, turn to the book of 1 Thessalonians and read me chapter 4, starting in verse 3." So they think it's about to be some climactic answer. They'll read me 1 Thessalonians 4:3. And here's what Paul says to the church, to believers. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." And they look at me like, "Seriously? Is that it? What's sanctification?" So I'll unpack that, "Hey, it's this process of us growing more and more like Jesus." So they're like, "What does that mean?" "It means that you should go to the school where you're going to get more of Jesus. You should want to go to the college where you will grow in Christlikeness and be transformed to the image of the Son. That's what God is after in the school you go to. It's not what you're going to study or if you're going to play ball there. That's stuff is great and God will use it, but God is after our holiness." This idea of the will of God is not just a high school issue. This is an issue in all of life. When we get done with college, we go, "God is it Your will for me to get married? And if so, who should I marry? When should I marry? What job do You want me to take? What house should I buy? What car should I drive? Should I switch jobs? What is Your will here?" And you can count on this, that God's will is always your sanctification. It's always conforming to Christ. We're so busy asking these secondary questions and God is saying that the primary question we should be asking is, "How can we get more of You? How can I look more like You? How can I reflect You more clearly?" God is saying, "Hey, I'm not so concerned about your questions and these

secondary issues. I'm concerned about you. I'm committed to life change here." And this should absolutely floor us. As sinful, fallen human beings, we're being conformed into the image of the Son of God.

C.S. Lewis says this about this process of conforming to Christ. "You are a bundle of self-centered fears, hopes, greeds, jealousies, and self-conceit, all doomed to death." And God is committed to transforming you and to making you something entirely new and entirely different, namely a little picture of Christ. So if we're honest the work of sanctification is progressive. This isn't something we master when we come to know the Lord and we move away from. We don't graduate from this. And it's not competed in this life. But don't miss this. God intends to get us as far as He can before death. So it's ever-increasing glory, ever-increasing joy, transformed from one degree of glory to the next. And He loves us so much that He said, "I'm going to continue to conform you to the image of the Son. I'm going to continue to transform your life." So when Lewis says we're a bundle of self-centered fears, hopes, greeds, jealousies and self-conceit, as believers living in a fallen world, this stuff still rears its head, right? It still pops up in our lives and in our hearts. And God says, "No, I'm going to continue to put that to death. I'm going to continue to make you look more and more and more like Jesus." So we've got to cling to this. This is our good, this is God's purpose in all of life, it's what He's up to and we have got to pray and beg God to awaken our hearts to this reality, that we would be fixed on this and that we would be addicted, obsessed with wanting to look more Jesus. Some of us just need to return to the childlikeness of our faith and wake up tomorrow and say, "I just want to look more like You. I just want to serve the way You serve, love the way You love, show compassion the way You show compassion." So we've got to cling to what He's up to, conforming us to Christ at all times and all seasons. If we were honest, it's easy to see this in Scripture, but when we get down to everyday life, there are certain seasons that it's just hard to see that God is big, good and in control and embrace this idea of being conformed to the image of Christ and walk in that well.

So we listed a few of those seasons earlier. There are seasons of suffering, seasons of sickness, seasons of loss, traumas, trials, temptations, difficult circumstances or challenges. But it's in these seasons that it's hard to see what He's up to and walk in what He's called us to walk in. So what I want to do with you for these next few minutes is just point out two seasons to you. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it's really important that we see God's heart and God's purpose here or we can absolutely be in for a world of pain and confusion. So the first season where it's hard to see the love, sovereignty and grace of God sometimes is in a season of pruning. This is a season where we are experiencing the discipline of the Lord. As believers in Jesus Christ, we know what sin is for us. God has sealed us with His Spirit, He's given us His Word and He's called us to walk a certain way. So when we step outside of that, we know what that is for us in everyday life, in the way we eat, drink, take care of our bodies, love our husbands/wives, love our kids, the way we work our job. We know what it means when we step outside of this and go, "Okay, I know what You're calling me to do, but I don't care," and we willingly transgress and rebel against God. And the beautiful thing about this season of pruning is that grace will swoop in to wound us so that it might heal us. That's always what grace is up to. So when C.S. Lewis refers to the discipline of the Lord, he says it's still hard. Even though we know that's what God's after, it's still difficult. Listen to what he says about the discipline of the Lord. "We shouldn't be surprised if we're in for a rough time. God will force us up to a higher level, putting us in situations where we will have to be very much braver, more patient or more loving than we ever dreamed of being before." God says, "I started a work in you, and I'm going to complete that work. I'm not going to let you waste your life." That's what's going on in a season of pruning. Hebrews 12 is going to be our staple mark passage on the discipline of the Lord. The author of Hebrews is going to compare the loving, gracious discipline of God the Father to that of an earthly Father, and he's going to tell us what God is up to in His heart. Hebrews 12:10 says, "For [our earthly fathers] disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness." So what God is up to in a season of pruning is our good, and that good is that we would share in His holiness. It's our sanctification again. It's being conformed to the image of Christ. He's saying, "I'm concerned about you, and you're going to look more like Jesus." That's what He's after here. That's what He's about.

So there are two ways to respond in these seasons when we experience the discipline of the Lord. The first is this. God has disciplined us, and we view that as deserved punishment. Like God is an angry father who is reprimanding us. And if we view the discipline of the Lord like that, we'll almost always do two things. We will try to clean ourselves up and look pretty or we'll sit and cower in guilt, shame and regret. Both responses there are going to say that we really don't understand the grace of God and the gospel very much. Because if we understood the grace of God in the gospel, we would know that somebody already got that reprimand. Somebody already got that punishment, Christ on the cross. And the Scriptures are going to say that the Father was pleased to crush Him with it. So when we respond in a moralistic way where we try to clean ourselves up or when we cower in guilt and shame, what we're saying is, "I'm just going to spit on the cross of Christ. I don't think the grace that has come to me through Jesus Christ is sufficient." And I don't know about you, but I have spat enough in my lifetime on the cross of my Savior and I don't want to spit anymore. This doesn't mean that the season is easy. Listen to how C.S. Lewis uses some imagery to describe the discipline of the Lord. He wants us to imagine ourselves like a living house. He says, "Imagine yourself a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing, so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of; throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but He is building a palace. He intends to come in and live in it Himself." This is what He's up to. This is what He's doing. And He will wreck our lives to win our hearts and conform us to the image of Christ. We've got to see this, and we've got to walk in this. That's the first season, the season of pruning, the discipline of the Lord.

The second season I want to point out to you that is difficult to see the sovereign love of God is the season of waiting. So this is a season where God will ask us or make us wait for something, someone or whatever it is that we want. So usually where our mind goes here when we think about the season of waiting, we think of the single man or woman who is waiting to get married. They're just waiting and keeping their fingers crossed going, "Lord, I know I don't have the gift of singleness. When am I going to meet my husband/wife. I just want to get married. When is that going to happen? I'm tired of waiting. Just bring 'em to me and let's get married." We have some singles in here. Don't look at me like I'm crazy and don't know what I'm talking about. Here's the thing. With the season of waiting, our minds might go there, but the reality is, throughout Scripture and our lives, God will force us or make us wait. This could be a million different things. This could be that there is a ministry position that your heart just beats for that you want to serve in, and God says, "Wait. I know you want that. Wait." This could be waiting to finish school. This could be waiting to get the job you want, the promotion you need or hit that next level of income. And some of this is all legitimate, but the fact of the matter is that God is committed to making His people wait and we've got to see what His purpose is here. I like what Paul Tripp says about waiting on the Lord. Tripps says, "Waiting is one of God's primary shaping tools. He is committed to using every tool at His disposal to rescue us from ourselves and transform us into the likeness of Christ." So when God is asking us to wait, He's about our sanctification again. He's about conforming us into the image of Jesus.

Tripp goes on to say that in these seasons of waiting, when God has us here for a reason, we tend to give way to a few different sinful "faithless habits." I hope this is helpful for you this morning. It was helpful for me to read over these. Here is the first faithless habit we can fall into in a season of waiting. We will give way to discouragement. Sitting in the season of waiting, we will let ourselves be ruled by negative thinking and negative emotions, our joy will dry up, vitality will dry up, life and joy in a relationship with God will wane and we just sit and sulk in that discouragement. "I don't know why you're making me wait. I don't know what's going on." Discouragement is the first thing.

The second faithless habit we can fall into is doubt, which Tripp points out will usually fuel anger. So the important thing with doubt and anger is that we think we're doubting and angry at the circumstance that we're in, but we're not doubtful

and we're not angry towards our circumstances or season of life. We are doubtful and angry at the sovereign God of the Bible and of our lives. That's who we're doubtful towards and angry towards. "God, do You really know what You're up to? Do You really know what You're asking me to do in waiting for this?" And we get angry about it. So that's the second faithless habit, doubt and anger.

The third one is this. We give way to envy. So instead of looking vertically towards God, we start to look horizontally towards each other. So we just look around in our season where God is asking us to wait and we say, "God, You didn't make them wait to get married. You didn't ask them to wait to get the promotion. You didn't ask them to wait to get the raise. You didn't ask that couple to wait to have children." And on and on we go. "They didn't have to wait to be exalted." I don't know how the Lord deals with you when you get like that, but for me He almost always takes me over to John 21. Jesus has just finished telling Peter the kind of death that he would die in order to glorify Him. He gets done telling Peter that, and He says, "Peter, you follow Me." And what does Peter do? A few verses later, John walks by, Peter sees John and says, "Jesus, what about him? What about John?" I love how Jesus responds to him. He looks at Peter and says, "Peter, what is that to you what happens to John, how John is going to die or what John is going to do to glorify Me." He looks at Peter and says, "Peter, you follow Me." And as disciples of Jesus Christ, the calling on our lives is to set our faces like flint on our Rabbi, on Christ and follow Him. That's the calling of God on our lives, to stay focused on Him and Him alone. So are we giving way to envy and jealousy in the season of waiting.

The last sinful faithless habit we can fall into is we will give way to inactivity. Sadly I think this is the route that most Christians take. It's usually after we have sat in the discouragement, we've doubted, we've gotten angry and we've gotten jealous. We say, "God, I don't know what You're up to, and I don't like it. So I'm just going to sit in this and wait for the waiting season to be over." So you know if you're in a season like this now or if you've been there. As you sit in this, your soul just shrinks and dries up. Because this is a season where God is saying, "No, you could go deep here. We can have a vibrant relationship. I'm committed to making you look like My Son. I want you to get more of Me." And we sit and get apathetic, lazy and cold, and instead of our spiritual muscles growing in that season, they atrophy. So do we give way to inactivity in the waiting season?

Tripp says that waiting is about giving you time to grow. God's timing is always right, and He isn't so much concerned about what you will experience and enjoy at the end of the waiting season, but on what you will become. That's what He's after. So the good news for us is, when we fall into one of these faithless habits, the Scriptures are going to clear that we have a gracious God. And when we're faithless, He's faithful. Isaiah 30:18 says, "blessed are all those who wait for him." The Scriptures are clear that God is gracious when we fall into this stuff and that none who wait on Him will be put to shame. So do we see the heart of God in asking us to wait?

So these are only two seasons, but we've got to see the heart of God here. We've got to see what He's up to. What He is always about is conforming us to the image of Jesus. I don't know how your church background was for you, but I didn't grow up in a church that emphasized the sovereignty of God very much. So now that I see it in the Scriptures, I don't want it to stop there. I don't want it to stop up here. I want this to change the way I live. I want it to change the person and the man who God is trying by all His grace at work with in me to become. That's what He is about. So I've got to ask myself the question: what would it be like if, as a community of believers, the church of God, we embraced this idea of the sovereignty of God, the love of God, the goodness of God, that He is in control, He is working all things together for our Good and what our good is and what He's after is conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ? So for some of us, I think this means we wake up tomorrow and are just floored again like we were at one season of our lives that that's what's actually going on inside of us, that God is committed to changing our lives and making us into something entirely new and entirely different. I think this means that we say, "I just want to reflect his character, the resolve, the selfcontrol, the patience, the peace and the love of Christ today. I want to look more like Christ tomorrow than I did today. I want to

grow in this. It's progressive. I want to walk in it. I don't want to stay stagnant." So if we embrace this as a church, I think this could be absolutely strengthening and life-giving for us. And as God sends us out to the world, to the city we live in, to our workplaces, to our neighborhoods, to our homes, I think we would have a certainty like Paul had a certainty. We would have a confidence not in ourselves, but in God, in Jesus. We bank our lives on this gospel, so then our lips are able to proclaim His greatness and His goodness, and our lives will testify to it.

Let's pray. "Father, we are in all different seasons of life in here this morning. We confess that, in the difficult seasons, it's easy for our faith to wane. And it's hard for us to see sometimes that you're good and you do good. So God, give us eyes to see You rightly and look up, look to the blood splattered cross of Christ where free grace drips down for us this morning. Christ is our only hope. He's our only boast. God would You help us see You rightly and feel deeply about what we see? God, we thank You that You are committed to making us look like entirely different people, namely a picture of Your Son. It's in Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

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