

# Sovereign Synergism

## Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

## Introduction

Dr. Torrey always said that [Romans 8:28](#) is a "soft pillow for a tired heart". Or as someone else has said "God's good promises put a rainbow of hope in every cloud and a "pillow of grace" in every bed of affliction!"

**Raymond Ortlund** writes that...

The hand of God is at the helm. He's steering us through the storms of life toward home, toward a safe haven. And He takes care to order all the events of our lives right now to speed us on our way there. This is what we call [Providence](#)-- God's overruling hand at work everywhere in a fallen world. The [Providence](#) of God is clearly taught from one end of the Bible to the other. And our confidence in the [Providence](#) of God is a faith so bold, so demanding, so unapologetic, that we cannot believe it without being transformed. Either all things

work together for our good, or nothing makes sense. So let's be bold about it. Let's either be transformed Christians or bitter skeptics, because we cannot just sort of believe [Romans 8:28](#). We either believe it or we doubt it. There is no middle ground. (**Romans 8:28**)

We have 4 choices of who or what is in control of all of our lives

### 1. Chance

Chance says that there is nothing in control, and that you and all that there is, is just a purposeless collision of atoms, that exist because of a meaningless and purposeless collision of matter that came from nothing to make everything that has no purpose. You have no meaning, no purpose, no future, no reason to live, you are worthless and powerless to change anything and why would you.

### 2. You

You are in control, which assumes that you have complete and inexhaustible understanding of all things and are able to control billions of variables of actions and choices that affect you both from volitional creatures and none volitional matter.

But if this were true, then you would never allow anything to go wrong and would do all that you could to avoid pain and sorrow and death. You would design for yourself the best life possible. But that is not the way it is...

### 3. Devil

If the devil were in control then the same applies to him that applied to you. He would have to be able to control every choice and action and of course if he could then he would make your life a living hell. Nothing but pain, sorrow and death, and eventual destruction would be your lot.

But obviously that is not the case, since we do have joy, happiness, and wonderful pleasures of this life.

So we would conclude that it is impossible for Chance to be in control, or you or the Devil..... that only leaves one other Possibility.....

### 4. God

An all wise, Sovereign omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, God who is Good, righteous, just, holy, loving, merciful, gracious.

This is the only thing that makes any sense of it all. This God who is in control has a purpose in all that he does. He does nothing without perfect wisdom and knowledge.

This truth is foundational to the truth of [Romans 8:28](#). If God doesn't have a purpose, then He couldn't work all things according to that purpose. Or, if He has a purpose, but He's not able to pull it

off, then your trials might be sabotaging His purpose. A heretical view held by some professing evangelicals called Open Theism argues that God is not sovereign over the terrible things that happen in the world. They're trying to get God off the hook for suffering, but they rob [Romans 8:28](#) of its comfort for us in times of suffering.

We must affirm three things about God's purpose:

#### A. GOD HAS AN ETERNAL PURPOSE THAT CANNOT BE THWARTED.

If a man is going to do anything of significance—build a house, found a company, or take a trip—he has a purpose and a plan to accomplish that purpose. It's unthinkable that the Sovereign God created the universe with no purpose or no plan to achieve that purpose. But we don't need to infer this by logic; the Bible often affirms that God has a purpose that can't be thwarted.

In the oldest book of the Bible, after all his suffering, Job replies to the Lord (42:2), "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted." In [Isaiah 14:24](#), with regard to the eventual downfall of Israel's enemy, Assyria, the prophet states, "The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, 'Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.'"

Later, regarding God's purpose to raise up Cyrus to free Israel from captivity, Isaiah (46:10-11) cites the Lord as saying, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.'"

Or, in Ephesians, after stating how God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestined us to adoption as sons (1:4,

5), Paul adds (1:11), “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.” (See, also, [Eph. 3:11](#).)

Thus God has an eternal purpose to glorify Himself by saving a people through His grace, so that Christ would be preeminent in all things. And nothing can thwart His purpose. This means that...

#### **B. SINFUL PEOPLE ARE NOT ABLE TO THWART OR FRUSTRATE GOD’S PURPOSE.**

After speaking of God as the almighty Creator, who spoke the universe into existence, the psalmist adds ([Ps. 33:10-11](#)), “The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.” So, rather than sinful people frustrating God’s purpose, God frustrates their purpose!

This truth is all through the Bible, but let me give you two examples. [Genesis 37-50](#) unfolds the moving story of Joseph and his brothers. Their father Jacob favored Joseph, which caused his brothers to hate him. They sold him into slavery in Egypt and lied to their father that a wild beast had killed him. In the providence of God, Joseph rose from prison to the position of second in command to Pharaoh. In that role, he was able to save his extended family during a long famine. He later explained to them ([Gen. 50:20](#)), “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” Joseph’s brothers’ sin could not thwart God’s greater purpose for His people.

The New Testament tells of the greatest evil that has ever been committed, when sinful men crucified the sinless Son of God. But did these evil men, acting under Satan’s influence, thwart God’s plan? In [Acts 4:27-28](#) we read the prayer of the early church when they faced persecution: “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both

Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.” The wicked men were responsible for their sin, but their sin fulfilled rather than thwarted God’s plan.

This means that no sinful person can thwart God’s purpose or plan for your life. The sinful mate who left you for another woman didn’t ruin God’s plan for your life. The drunk driver who killed your loved ones can’t frustrate God’s purpose for their lives or your life. The evil person at work who lied about you and got you wrongfully fired didn’t divert God’s purpose for your life. But maybe you’re thinking, “But, what about free will? God gave everyone free will, didn’t He? Couldn’t these people mess up God’s plan by their free will?”

### C. “FREE WILL” DOES NOT THWART OR FRUSTRATE GOD’S PURPOSE.

I don’t like the term “free will,” because it’s misleading. No one has perfectly *free* will. You were not free to choose when or in what country you were born, to whom you were born, what gender you were born, or what genetic traits you were born with. All of those factors, which greatly influence your choices, were determined apart from your will. If you had been born to a Muslim family in Afghanistan 500 years ago, you would not have been “free” to choose Christ because you never would have heard of Him. And even if a missionary had come to your village and preached the gospel (and survived!), there would have been tremendous social pressure to keep you from turning against your family by believing in Christ. The will is not totally “free.”

In addition, as we’ve seen all through Romans, you were born “in Adam,” with a fallen sin nature. You did not seek for God because you hated Him. You were not able to submit to God’s holy law, but rather suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. Sin has blinded all of

us toward the things of God. As Charles Wesley put it, our will is “fast bound in sin and nature’s night.”

But this invokes the question, “If God is absolutely sovereign and our will is not totally free, then are we puppets or robots? Aren’t we free to make choices for which we are responsible?” The Bible is clear that God is sovereign *and* people make choices for which they are responsible. We must affirm both. But the point is, no choice of the worst sinner, even of a man like Hitler, can thwart God’s purpose to save and glorify His people. [Romans 8:28](#) only works if God has an eternal purpose that He is able to accomplish in spite of sinful people and their so-called “free will.”

## Lesson

### I. The Certainty

And we know

**eidó: be aware, behold, consider, perceive**

**Original Word:** οἶδα

**Part of Speech:** Verb

**Transliteration:** eidó

**Phonetic Spelling:** (i'-do)

**Short Definition:** I know, remember

**Definition:** I know, remember, appreciate.

#### **HELPS Word-studies**

**1492** *eídō* (*oida*) – properly, to see with *physical* eyes (cf. Ro 1:11), as it naturally bridges to the *metaphorical* sense: *perceiving* ("mentally seeing").

This is akin to the expressions: "I see what You mean"; "I see what you are saying."

1492 /*eídō* ("seeing that becomes *knowing*") then is a *gateway* to grasp spiritual truth (reality) from a physical plane. 1492 (*eídō*) then is physical seeing (sight) which should be the constant bridge to mental and spiritual seeing (*comprehension*).

**We know** (1492) (**eido = perfect tense**) (Uses in Romans) refers to knowledge which comes from one's state of being, intuitive knowledge. Oida means absolute, positive knowledge which one has beyond a doubt. It refers to that which is the common knowledge of the Christian, a settled intuitive knowledge which the Holy Spirit makes real. God Himself has placed the knowledge of this verse in our hearts. Notice that although all believers **know** the following truth **intuitively**, they may not always fully understand and sense it **experientially**.

## II. The Completeness



that all things**pas: all, every****Original Word:** πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν**Part of Speech:** Adjective**Transliteration:** pas**Phonetic Spelling:** (pas)**Short Definition:** all, the whole, every kind of**Definition:** all, the whole, every kind of.**HELPS Word-studies****3956** *pás* – *each, every*; each "part(s) of a totality" (*L & N*, 1, 59.24).**3956** /*pás* ("each, every") means "all" in the sense of "each (every) part that applies." The emphasis of the total picture then is on "one piece at a time."**365** (*ananeóō*) then focuses on the *part(s)* making up the whole – viewing the whole *in terms of the individual parts*.[When **3956** (*pás*) modifies a word with the definite article it has "*extensive-intensive*" force – and is straightforward *intensive* when the Greek definite article is lacking.]**Spurgeon** comments that **all things**...

is a very comprehensive expression, is it not? It includes your present trouble, your aching head, your heavy heart: "all things." "All things work." There is nothing idle in God's domain

**McGee** comments that all things include

All things"—good and bad; bright and dark; sweet and bitter; easy and hard; happy and sad; prosperity and poverty; health and sickness; calm and storm; comfort and suffering; life and death.(McGee, J V: *Thru the Bible Commentary*: Thomas Nelson)

**John MacArthur** writes that...

**All things** is utterly comprehensive, having no qualifications or limits. Neither this verse nor its context allows for restrictions or conditions. All things is inclusive in the fullest possible sense. Nothing existing or occurring in heaven or on earth "shall be able

to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus” (8:39). Paul is not saying that God prevents His children from experiencing **things** that can harm them. He is rather attesting that the Lord takes all that He allows to happen to His beloved children, even the worst things, and turns those things ultimately into blessings... No matter what our situation, our suffering, our persecution, our sinful failure, our pain, our lack of faith-in those things, as well as in **all** other **things**, our heavenly Father will work to produce our ultimate victory and blessing. The corollary of that truth is that nothing can ultimately work against us. (MacArthur, J: *Romans 1-8*. Chicago: Moody Press)

**Robert Haldane** - Nothing is more necessary for Christians than to be well persuaded of the happiness and privileges of their condition, that they may be able to serve God with cheerfulness and freedom of spirit, and to pass through the troubles and difficulties of the world. Here, then, is further consolation: Christians are often in sorrows, sufferings, and trials. This is not in itself joyous, but grievous; but in another point of view it is a matter of joy. Though afflictions in themselves are evil, yet in their effects as overruled and directed by God, they are useful. Yea, all things, of every kind, that happen to the Christian, are overruled by God for his good! (**Haldane, R. An Exposition on the Epistle to the Romans**)

Did you ever hear of a man who got his health by being sick? That is a Christian. He gets rich by his losses, he rises by his falls, he goes on by being pushed back, he lives by dying, he grows by being diminished, and becomes full by being emptied. Well, if the bad things work him so much good, what must his best things do? If he can sing in a dungeon, how sweetly will he sing in heaven!

Many of us have some salt with our meals. Table salt is made up of both sodium and chloride. By itself, sodium is a deadly

poison, and so is chloride. Put them together, and you have table salt. Salt flavors food, and a certain amount of salt is necessary for health and life. We cannot live without some salt in our systems.

God can take things that are bad and put them in the crucible of His wisdom and love. He works all things together for good, and He gives us the glorious, wonderful promise that He will do so.

I read a story about a shipwreck. When the sole survivor reached a small, uninhabited island, he prayed for God to rescue him, but help didn't come. Eventually he built a hut out of driftwood for protection from the elements. One day he returned from scavenging for food and found his hut in flames, the smoke rising into the sky. Angrily he cried,  
"God, how could You do this to me?"

The next morning he was awakened by rescuers.

"How did you know I was here?" he asked.

"We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

### **III. The Cause**

work together for good

**sunergeó: to work together****Original Word:** ΣΥΝΕΡΓΕΩ**Part of Speech:** Verb**Transliteration:** sunergeó**Phonetic Spelling:** (soon-erg-eh'-o)**Short Definition:** I work together**Definition:** I cooperate with, work together.**NAS Exhaustive Concordance****Word Origin**from **sunergos****Definition**

to work together

**Work together (4903)** (**sunergeo** from **sun** = with, speaks of intimacy + **érgon** = work > English word "**synergy**" = the potential ability of individual organizations or groups to be more successful or productive as a result of a merger) means to be a fellow-worker, and so to co-operate. God is our "Fellow Worker" Who is Himself the One working in our behalf and causing all things to work together for good. The **present tense** and **active voice** indicates our Father is continually working all things together for our good!

**MacArthur** adds that...

**sunergeo** (is the Greek word) from which is derived the English term **synergism**, the working together of various elements to produce an effect greater than, and often completely different from, the sum of each element acting separately... Contrary to what the King James rendering seems to suggest, it is not that things in themselves work together to produce good. As Paul has made clear earlier in the verse, it is God's providential power and will, not a natural synergism of circumstances and events in our lives, that causes them to work together for good... No matter what happens in our lives as His children, the providence of God uses it for our temporal as well as our eternal benefit, sometimes by saving us from tragedies and sometimes by sending us through them in order to draw us closer to Him... God often

delays the temporal as well as the ultimate good that He promises... Even when our outward circumstances are dire—perhaps especially when they are dire and seemingly hopeless from our perspective—God is purifying and renewing our redeemed inner beings in preparation for glorification, the ultimate good... God uses the evil of sin as a means of bringing good to His children. That would have to be true if Paul’s statement about “all things” is taken at face value. Even more than suffering and temptation, sin is not good in itself, because it is the antithesis of good. Yet, in God’s infinite wisdom and power, it is most remarkable of all that He turns sin to our good. It is of great importance, of course, to recognize that God does not use sin for good in the sense of its being an instrument of His righteousness. That would be the most obvious of self-contradictions. The Lord uses sin to bring good to His children by overruling it, canceling its normal evil consequences and miraculously substituting His benefits... the sinning believer is not spared God’s chastisement but is assured of it as a remedial tool for producing holiness (see note [Hebrews 12:10](#)). That is the supreme good for which God causes our sin to work. (MacArthur, J: *Romans 1-8*. Chicago: Moody Press) (Bolding added)

**Good** (18) (**agathos [word study]**) means beneficial, profitable or useful. In other words, God will cause everything in our lives to become beneficial, spiritually profitable, useful and good, even in a fallen world filled with sin and corruption. Think of ordinary table salt. It is composed of two chemicals, sodium and chlorine, which by themselves can be toxic and yet when properly combined they produce a beneficial substance. Remember also that the **good** is what is good from God’s perspective.

**J Vernon McGee** adds that...

And I am confident that we as children of God will be able to look back over our lives someday and say, “All of this worked out for good.” Job could say, “Though he slay

me, yet will I trust in him ... ” ([Job 13:15](#)). That is the kind of faith in God we need, friend. We know that He is going to make things work out for good because He’s the One who is motivating it. He’s the One who is energizing it. (McGee, J V: [Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Ray Pritchard** explains "**good**" by asking...

Is Paul saying, "Whatever happens is good." **No.**

Is he saying that suffering and evil and tragedy are good? **No.**

Is he saying everything will work out if we just have enough faith? **No.**

Is he saying that we will be able to understand why God allowed tragedy to come? **No.**

**What, then, is he saying?** He is erecting a sign over the unexplainable mysteries of life—a sign which reads "**Quiet. God at work.**" How? We're not always sure. To what end? Good, and not evil. That's what [Romans 8:28](#) is saying... Our danger is that we will judge the end by the beginning. Or, to be more exact, that we will judge what we cannot see by what we can see. That is, when tragedy strikes, if we can't see a purpose, we assume there isn't one. But the very opposite is true. We ought to judge the beginning by the end.

In a message on [Romans 8:28](#) that he gave at the 2010 Desiring God National Conference, Randy Alcorn mentioned Scott and Janet Willis, who were driving behind a truck when a piece of metal flew off the truck and punctured their gas tank, causing their minivan to explode. They escaped, but six of their children burned to death in the inferno. Alcorn interviewed them 14 years later and they both affirmed that in spite of their great loss, God’s goodness and sovereignty are now more precious to them than before.

He also mentioned Joni Eareckson Tada, who was paralyzed from the neck down in a diving accident at age 17. Because of that accident, she has had a powerful ministry with disabled people. But now, in her sixties, she has breast cancer. She told Randy, “I’ve had a ministry to disabled people for many years. But now I have a ministry to people with cancer!” Do you believe that God is working *all your* trials together for your ultimate good and for the good of those to whom He has called you to serve?

I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
She chattered all the way.  
But I was none the wiser,  
For all she had to say.

Then I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
And ne'er a word said she.  
But, oh, the lessons I did learn  
When Sorrow walked with me.

The opening question of the **Heidelberg Catechism** (1563) asks “What is your only comfort in life and death?”

**Answer:** “That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ who... so preserves me that without the will of my Father in heaven not a

hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation.”

## IV. The Condition

to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

The NASB reads, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Due to a textual variant, the ESV translates it slightly differently and, I think, more accurately: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

**Calvin** comments on this verse noting that “Though the elect and the reprobate are indiscriminately exposed to similar evils, there is yet a great, difference; for God trains up the faithful by afflictions, and thereby promotes their salvation.” (**Romans 8 - John Calvin's Commentaries on the Bible**)

**Who can "claim" the wonderful truth in this verse?** Only those who love God. Paul is not speaking here of a special class of believers who love God in contrast to other believers who do not



love God. While it is certainly true that some believers love the Saviour more than others, and demonstrate this by their faithful obedience to His Word, yet it is also true that there is a sense in which all believers love Christ. Love for Christ is demonstrated by obedience to His Word (see below), and those who refuse to keep His commandments are liars if they claim to know Christ for John teaches that..

And by this we **know** that we have come to know Him, **if** we keep (**present tense**) His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep (**present tense**) His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him but whoever keeps (**present tense**) His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought (**present tense**) himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. ([1John 2:3-6](#))

As sons and daughters of the Most High God, our lives should be characterized by **obedience**...

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance ([1Pe 1:14-note](#)).

We obey because we love our Heavenly Father. How can we do anything less?

**Love** (25) (**agapao [word study]**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially love and ultimately describes the love which God Himself is. **Agapao** is not sentimental or emotional love but represents an obedience as the act of one's will. This is the only place in Romans where Paul wrote of the believer's love for God; everywhere else he referred to God's love for the believer.

The **present tense** indicates that **agapao** is a believer's lifestyle or habit of life (in contrast to Demas - [2Ti 4:10-note](#)). Believers are not perfect but the general direction of their life is to show love toward God. If your life does not demonstrate this tendency, read

the verses above from ([1John 2:3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)). John further explains that...

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins...We love, because He first loved us....If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ([1Jn 4:10,19, 20](#))

**R C Sproul** has an interesting comment on "**those who love Him**" writing that...

Notice that Paul does not say "those who believe in him" but "those who love him." Paul focuses on the fact that, in the last analysis, the dividing line between the Christian and the unbeliever is not over the issue simply of believing in some God or other, but over the issue of loving God. The profession of faith can be very different from the possession of faith. Many there are who mistakenly identify the two ideas. The word "love" serves to distinguish those who both profess and possess a saving relationship with Christ. (Sproul, R. Before the Face of God. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries)

**C H Spurgeon** adds in regard to "them that love God"...

"there are many things in which the worldly and the godly do agree; but on this point there is a vital difference. No ungodly man loves God in the Bible sense of the term. An unconverted man may love a God, as, for instance, the God of nature, and the God of the imagination; but the God of revelation no man can love, unless grace turn him from his natural enmity towards God. And there may be many differences between godly men; they may belong to different sects, hold very opposite opinions, but all agree in this, that they love God.

The expression "**those who love God**" is often a descriptive name for believers as demonstrated in the following examples...

but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO **LOVE HIM**." [1Corinthians 2:9](#)

and though you have not seen Him, you **love** Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, [1 Peter 1:8](#) (note)

but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who **love** Me and keep My commandments. [Exodus 20:6](#)

Hate evil, you who **love** the LORD, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked. [Psalms 97:10](#) (See Spurgeon's note)

The LORD keeps all who **love** Him; but all the wicked, He will destroy. [Psalms 145:20](#) (See Spurgeon's note)

in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have **loved** His appearing. [2 Timothy 4:8](#) (note)

Note the association of love for God and obedience to Him. Jesus reiterates this important association declaring that..

"If you **love** Me, you will keep My commandments." ([John 14:15](#))

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who **loves** Me; and he who **loves** Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." ([John 14:21](#))

"If anyone **loves** Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. ([John 14:23](#))

**Ron Lee Davis** writes in his book *Becoming a Whole Person in a Broken World*,

"The good news is not that God will make our circumstances come out the way we like, but that God can weave even our disappointments and disasters into His eternal plan. The evil that happens to us can be transformed into God's good. [Ro 8:28](#) is God's guarantee that if we love God, our lives can be used to achieve His purposes and further His kingdom"

In his book "Why Us?" **Warren Wiersbe** states that God "proves His **sovereignty**, not by intervening constantly and preventing these events, but by ruling and overruling them so that even tragedies end up accomplishing His ultimate purposes"

**The Called** (2822) (**kletos**) (Click word study of [kletos](#)) means invited (but see Newell's comment below) or welcomed and was originally used to designate those invited to a banquet.

**R C Sproul** comments that...

Paul speaks not of an external call to the gospel, but of the inward call of the Holy Spirit. In theology we term this "effectual calling." No one will love God unless God first changes the disposition of the heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. The capacity to love God is not natural to fallen humanity but must be supernaturally granted by

the Father, who takes the initiative in restoring us to himself. The regenerative work of God must precede the act of repentance and faith. Only by the divine initiative is anyone saved. (Sproul, R. Before the Face of God. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; Ligonier Ministries)

**Dr J Vernon McGee** gives the following illustration...

A boy down in my southland years ago wanted to join a church. So the deacons were examining him. They asked, "How did you get saved?" His answer was, "God did His part, and I did my part." They thought there was something wrong with his doctrine, so they questioned further. "What was God's part and what was your part?" His explanation was a good one. He said, "God's part was the saving, and my part was the sinning. I done run from Him as fast as my sinful heart and rebellious legs could take me. He done took out after me till he run me down." My friend, that is the way I got saved also.

**Purpose** (4286) (**prothesis [word study]** from **pró** = before, forth + **tithemi** = place) means to plan in advance and comes to mean that which is planned or purposed in advance. Purpose means an intelligent decision which the will is bent to accomplish. God has two purposes, our good and His glory and ultimately, He will make us like Jesus Christ! Furthermore His purpose is certain to succeed! And is well that we remember that the purposes of God are the most important reality in one's spiritual life. God's purpose is to make His children like His Son, and He will succeed. The Spirit intercedes for us and guides us as we pray, and the circumstances of life work for our good, no matter how painful they may be.

**prothesis: a setting forth, i.e. fig. proposal, spec. the showbread, sacred (bread)**

**Original Word:** πρόθεσις, εως, ἡ

**Part of Speech:** Noun, Feminine

**Transliteration:** prothesis

**Phonetic Spelling:** (proth'-es-is)

**Short Definition:** the show-bread, predetermination

**Definition:** a setting forth, the show-bread; predetermination, purpose.

### **HELPS Word-studies**

**4286** *próthesis* (from **4253** /*pró*, "before" and **5087** /*títhēmi*, "purposefully set forth") – properly, *providence* – literally, "a setting forth in advance for a *specific purpose* ("God's *pre-thesis*").

"I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no **purpose** of Thine can be thwarted (or stopped) ." ([Job 42:2](#))

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When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, "Have you ever had any accidents?" After a moment's reflection, the applicant responded, "Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle."

"Wouldn't you call those accidents?" replied the puzzled agent. "Naw," the cowboy said, "they did it on purpose!"

That story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God's children. In today's Scripture, we read how Joseph interpreted a difficult experience that had seemed like a great calamity. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later learned that "God meant it for good" ([Gen. 50:20](#)).

**When fear and worry test your faith  
And anxious thoughts assail,  
Remember God is in control  
And He will never fail.**

**Ray Pritchard** tells the story...

...of a father whose son was killed in a terrible accident. He came to his pastor and in great anger said, "Where was God when my son died?" The pastor thought for a moment and said, "The same place he was when his Son died."