Part of the answer lies in the Greek. The text does not say that “all things” work together for good. The NASB gets this part of it right. “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.” The NLT does a great job. “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God.”

I think the NIV gets it the most right. “In all things God works for the good of those who love him.” It gets the word order right. τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν. Most importantly, these last three translations see that the subject of the verb συνεργεῖ is “God,” not “all things.” συνεργεῖ must go back to θεὸν, not πάντα (see how “God” is the subject in the next two verses). I know a neuter plural subject can take a singular verb, but that can’t be what Paul is saying. To make any sense, πάντα must be accusative, either as the direct object or as an adverbial accusative of respect” (see Moo). (<https://www.billmounce.com/monday-with-mounce/do-all-things-really-work-good-romans-8-28>)

we know in fact that God works all

things together for good with those who

love him who are called according to his

purpose

that may not be the translation that you

knew it certainly isn't the translation

that I learned when I was younger I

learned as many of you will have done

the idea that God works all things

together for good for those who love him

well I still want to say there is a

truth there God is Sovereign and those

who are his people can trust that his

will will be done but I don't think

that's what Paul is talking about here

because it isn't actually what the Greek

text says the Greek text has a verb in

the middle which is definitely about

working with not for sun ergi ERG is the

work bit soon means with God works all

things for good with those who love him

what is Paul talking about well in the

verses immediately before which in the

usual reading feel a bit detached

actually Paul is talking about the

prayer life of the people of God

particularly the prayer life at the

heart of the darkness of the world

Paul talks about the whole creation

groaning together like a woman in labor

pains longing for the new creation to be

born and then he talks about us too

groaning as we wait for our adoption as

God's Sons and Daughters the Redemption

of our bodies we are longing for

resurrection and therefore the heart of

the groaning of creation we have the

groaning of the church but then Paul

says that actually the spirit groans

within us as this is going on and we

have here a trinitarian Theology of

prayer that God gives his people his own

spirit so that by their wrestling with

the problems and pains and sufferings of

the world in and through God's spirit

they may be part of God's ongoing work

in the world and for the world so we

know that God works all things together

for good through and with those who love

him and that idea of loving God which

looks bad back to the great Hebrew

prayer the Shema you shall love the Lord

your God which Paul has alluded to in

Romans chapter 5 already this is a

picture of God

inviting his people to share with him in

the work he is doing in the world

we in the western theological Traditions

have been worried about this idea

because we are learned we have learned

to distrust synergism working with ISM

because any idea that I am saved partly

by God imparted by my own efforts is

anathema to those who have been properly

taught justification by faith but Paul

isn't talking about that here he's

talking about people who have come to

Faith who do love God in whose Hearts

the holy spirit is working and Paul is

saying that's how God works in the world

with and through those who love him who

are called according to his purpose the

purpose is not simply I've been called

so that I can belong to God it's I've

been called so that I can be part of

God's work in the world and Paul goes on

to talk about being conformed to the

image of the son that he might be the

firstborn among many brothers and

sisters and the image of God's son is of

the one through who whom God does the

work that he always intended to do in

the world revealing himself as the

righteous God and above all as the

loving God as God the Redeemer as God

who is accomplishing New Creation this

then is the meaning of this astonishing

and often misunderstood verse that we

are called to play our part as people of

Prayer of spirit given prayer of prayer

even when we don't know what to pray for

people who are prepared to stand in the

darkness and hold on to the love of God

in the middle of the groaning of all

creation so that God eventually may be

all in all and we will look back and

discover perhaps to our amazement that

our work of prayer was somehow included

in what God was doing in his wider

purposes

so may God give you patience forbearance

and hope so that you may become people

of prayer people who will stand in the

darkness in the presence of God and will

allow God's work to be done through you

as well as for you amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ih_gQFgYrQA>

**Strong's Concordance**

**sunergeó: to work together**

**Original Word:**συνεργέω  
**Part of Speech:**Verb  
**Transliteration:**sunergeó  
**Phonetic Spelling:**(soon-erg-eh'-o)  
**Definition:**to work together  
**Usage:**I cooperate with, work together.

**Englishman's Concordance**

[**Mark 16:20**](https://biblehub.com/text/mark/16-20.htm)[**V-PPA-GMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/mark/16.htm) τοῦ κυρίου **συνεργοῦντος** καὶ τὸν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/mark/16.htm) while the Lord *worked* with them, and confirmed  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/mark/16.htm) the Lord *working with* [them], and  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/mark/16-20.htm) the Lord *working with [them]* and the

[**Romans 8:28**](https://biblehub.com/text/romans/8-28.htm)[**V-PIA-3S**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/8.htm) θεὸν πάντα **συνεργεῖ** ὁ θεὸς  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/romans/8.htm) that God *causes* all things  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/romans/8.htm) that all things *work together* for  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/8-28.htm) God all things *works together* God

[**1 Corinthians 16:16**](https://biblehub.com/text/1_corinthians/16-16.htm)[**V-PPA-DMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/16.htm) παντὶ τῷ **συνεργοῦντι** καὶ κοπιῶντι  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/1_corinthians/16.htm) and to everyone *who helps in the work* and labors.  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/1_corinthians/16.htm) to every one *that helpeth* with [us], and  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/16-16.htm) to everyone *working with [us]* and straining

[**2 Corinthians 6:1**](https://biblehub.com/text/2_corinthians/6-1.htm)[**V-PPA-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/6.htm) **Συνεργοῦντες** δὲ καὶ  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/2_corinthians/6.htm) *And working together* [with Him], we also  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/2_corinthians/6.htm) then, *[as] workers together* [with him], beseech  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/6-1.htm) *working together* moreover also

[**James 2:22**](https://biblehub.com/text/james/2-22.htm)[**V-IIA-3S**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2.htm) ἡ πίστις **συνήργει** τοῖς ἔργοις  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/james/2.htm) that faith *was working* with his works,  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/james/2.htm) how faith *wrought* with his works,  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/james/2-22.htm) the faith *was working with* the works

[**Strong's Greek 4903**](https://biblehub.com/greek/4903.htm)[**5 Occurrences**](https://biblehub.com/greek/strongs_4903.htm)  
  
[συνήργει — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sune_rgei_4903.htm)  
[συνεργεῖ — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergei_4903.htm)  
[Συνεργοῦντες — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergountes_4903.htm)  
[συνεργοῦντι — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergounti_4903.htm)  
[συνεργοῦντος — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergountos_4903.htm)

**Strong's Exhaustive Concordance**

to work together

From [sunergos](https://biblehub.com/greek/4904.htm); to be a fellow-worker, i.e. Co-operate -- help (work) with, work(-er) together.

see GREEK [sunergos](https://biblehub.com/greek/4904.htm)

**Thayer's Greek Lexicon**

**STRONGS NT 4904: συνεργός**  
  
**συνεργός**, συνεργόν (σύν and ἘΡΓΩ) (from Pindar), Euripides, Thucydides down, **a companion in work, fellow-worker** (Vulg.adjutor ([Philippians 2:25](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/2-25.htm); [3 John 1:8](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/3_john/1-8.htm) co-operator)): in the N. T. with a genitive of the person, one who labors with another in furthering the cause of Christ, [Romans 16:3, 9, 21](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16-3.htm); [Philippians 2:25](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/2-25.htm); [Philippians 4:3](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/4-3.htm); ([1 Thessalonians 3:2](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_thessalonians/3-2.htm) Rec.); [Philemon 1:1, 24](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philemon/1-1.htm); Θεοῦ, one whom God employs as an assistant, as it were (a fellow-worker with God), [1 Thessalonians 3:2](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_thessalonians/3-2.htm) (G L text WH marginal reading but with τοῦ Θεοῦ in brackets; Rec. et al. διάκονον, which see 1). plural: [1 Corinthians 3:9](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/3-9.htm); with the genitive of the thing (**a joint-promoter** (A. V. **helper**)), συνεργοί ἐσμεν τῆς χαρᾶς, we labor with you to the end that we may rejoice in your Christian state, [2 Corinthians 1:24](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/1-24.htm). εἰς ὑμᾶς (my) fellow-worker to you-ward, in reference to you, [2 Corinthians 8:23](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/8-23.htm); εἰς τήν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, for the advancement of the kingdom of God, [Colossians 4:11](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/colossians/4-11.htm); τῇ ἀλήθεια, for (the benefit of) the truth (others render (so R. V.) 'with the truth'; see Westcott at the passage), [3 John 1:8](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/3_john/1-8.htm). (2 Macc. 8:7 2Macc. 14:5.)

[**Romans 16:3**](https://biblehub.com/text/romans/16-3.htm)[**Adj-AMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16.htm) Ἀκύλαν τοὺς **συνεργούς** μου ἐν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/romans/16.htm) and Aquila, *my fellow workers* in Christ  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/romans/16.htm) Aquila my *helpers* in Christ  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16-3.htm) Aquila the *fellow workers* of me in

[**Romans 16:9**](https://biblehub.com/text/romans/16-9.htm)[**Adj-AMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16.htm) Οὐρβανὸν τὸν **συνεργὸν** ἡμῶν ἐν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/romans/16.htm) Urbanus, *our fellow worker* in Christ,  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/romans/16.htm) Urbane, our *helper* in Christ,  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16-9.htm) Urbanus the *fellow worker* of us in

[**Romans 16:21**](https://biblehub.com/text/romans/16-21.htm)[**Adj-NMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16.htm) Τιμόθεος ὁ **συνεργός** μου καὶ  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/romans/16.htm) Timothy *my fellow worker* greets  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/romans/16.htm) Timotheus my *workfellow,* and Lucius,  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/romans/16-21.htm) Timothy the *fellow worker* of me and

[**1 Corinthians 3:9**](https://biblehub.com/text/1_corinthians/3-9.htm)[**Adj-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/3.htm) γάρ ἐσμεν **συνεργοί** θεοῦ γεώργιον  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/1_corinthians/3.htm) For we are God's *fellow workers;* you are God's  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/1_corinthians/3.htm) we are *labourers together* with God:  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_corinthians/3-9.htm) indeed we are *fellow workers* God's field

[**2 Corinthians 1:24**](https://biblehub.com/text/2_corinthians/1-24.htm)[**Adj-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/1.htm) πίστεως ἀλλὰ **συνεργοί** ἐσμεν τῆς  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/2_corinthians/1.htm) your faith, *but are workers* with you for your joy;  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/2_corinthians/1.htm) but are *helpers* of your joy:  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/1-24.htm) faith but *fellow workers* are of the

[**2 Corinthians 8:23**](https://biblehub.com/text/2_corinthians/8-23.htm)[**Adj-NMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/8.htm) εἰς ὑμᾶς **συνεργός** εἴτε ἀδελφοὶ  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/2_corinthians/8.htm) [he is] my partner *and fellow worker* among  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/2_corinthians/8.htm) and *fellowhelper* concerning  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/2_corinthians/8-23.htm) for you *a fellow worker* or brothers

[**Philippians 2:25**](https://biblehub.com/text/philippians/2-25.htm)[**Adj-AMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/2.htm) ἀδελφὸν καὶ **συνεργὸν** καὶ συστρατιώτην  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/philippians/2.htm) my brother *and fellow worker* and fellow soldier,  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/philippians/2.htm) and *companion in labour,* and  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/2-25.htm) brother and *fellow worker* and fellow soldier

[**Philippians 4:3**](https://biblehub.com/text/philippians/4-3.htm)[**Adj-GMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/4.htm) τῶν λοιπῶν **συνεργῶν** μου ὧν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/philippians/4.htm) and the rest *of my fellow workers,* whose  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/philippians/4.htm) my *fellowlabourers,* whose  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philippians/4-3.htm) the rest *of [the]fellow workers* of me whose

[**Colossians 4:11**](https://biblehub.com/text/colossians/4-11.htm)[**Adj-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/colossians/4.htm) οὗτοι μόνοι **συνεργοὶ** εἰς τὴν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/colossians/4.htm) are the only *fellow workers* for the kingdom  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/colossians/4.htm) only *[are my] fellowworkers* unto  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/colossians/4-11.htm) these only *fellow workers* for the

[**1 Thessalonians 3:2**](https://biblehub.com/text/1_thessalonians/3-2.htm)[**N-AMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_thessalonians/3.htm) ἡμῶν καὶ **συνεργὸν** τοῦ θεοῦ  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_thessalonians/3-2.htm) of us and *fellow worker* of God

[**Philemon 1:1**](https://biblehub.com/text/philemon/1-1.htm)[**Adj-DMS**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philemon/1.htm) ἀγαπητῷ καὶ **συνεργῷ** ἡμῶν  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/philemon/1.htm) our beloved *[brother] and fellow worker,*  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/philemon/1.htm) dearly beloved, and *fellowlabourer,*  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philemon/1-1.htm) beloved and *fellow worker* of us

[**Philemon 1:24**](https://biblehub.com/text/philemon/1-24.htm)[**Adj-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philemon/1.htm) Λουκᾶς οἱ **συνεργοί** μου  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/philemon/1.htm) Demas, Luke, *my fellow workers.*  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/philemon/1.htm) Lucas, my *fellowlabourers.*  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/philemon/1-24.htm) Luke the *fellow workers* of me

[**3 John 1:8**](https://biblehub.com/text/3_john/1-8.htm)[**Adj-NMP**](https://biblehub.com/abbrev.htm)  
[GRK:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/3_john/1.htm) τοιούτους ἵνα **συνεργοὶ** γινώμεθα τῇ  
[NAS:](http://biblehub.com/nas/3_john/1.htm) so *that we may be fellow workers* with the truth.  
[KJV:](https://biblehub.com/kjvs/3_john/1.htm) we might be *fellowhelpers* to the truth.  
[INT:](https://biblehub.com/interlinear/3_john/1-8.htm) such that *fellow workers* we might be with the

[**Strong's Greek 4904**](https://biblehub.com/greek/4904.htm)[**13 Occurrences**](https://biblehub.com/greek/strongs_4904.htm)  
  
[συνεργῷ — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergo__4904.htm)  
[συνεργῶν — 1 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergo_n_4904.htm)  
[συνεργοί — 5 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergoi_4904.htm)  
[συνεργὸν — 3 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergon_4904.htm)  
[συνεργός — 2 Occ.](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergos_4904.htm)  
[συνεργούς —](https://biblehub.com/greek/sunergous_4904.htm)

# [**In Romans 8:28 do "all things work together" or does "God work all things together" for the good?**](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth)

[Ask Question](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/ask)

Asked 9 years, 10 months ago

Modified [3 years, 6 months ago](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth?lastactivity)

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**10**

Romans 8:28 (NA28) reads:

Οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.

There is also a textual variant that explicitly makes 'God' the subject of συνεργεῖ.

Here are some popular English translations of the verse:

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

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (NIV).

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 (NASB).

Each of these three translations differs in a significant way, especially when using this verse to comfort grieving families. The NIV sits best with me on this verse, but is this the best reading of the Greek text?

πάντα ("all [things]") is neuter plural and can be either nominative or accusative, and could thus be either the subject or the direct object of συνεργεῖ, but if 'God' is the subject then πάντα can't be.

However, συνεργεῖ is usually intransitive, which means πάντα could be an adverbial accusative ("in all [things]"), which would coincide with the NIV reading.

Which reading is best given the Greek syntax of this passage and it's surrounding context?

Please consider internal and external evidence (i.e. the textual variants, other early translations or expositions by early commentators, etc.).

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**1**

asked May 23, 2014 at 23:59

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**8,906**66 gold badges5858 silver badges115115 bronze badges

* Wouldn't it be odd for a plural subject to take a singular verb?

– [fumanchu](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/52/fumanchu" \o "1,644 reputation)

[May 24, 2014 at 15:23](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment19780_9271)

* Does every verb needs a visible subject? "Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις..." ~= "and it happened in those days..." The "it" is implied.

– [fumanchu](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/52/fumanchu" \o "1,644 reputation)

[May 24, 2014 at 15:28](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment19781_9271)

* 2

it's not odd at all for a singular verb to take a neuter plural noun as the subject (it happens all the time, cf. BDF § 133: "Perhaps no syntactical peculiarity of Greek is more striking to us than the use of the singular verb with a neuter plural subject"). And no, not all verbs need a visible subject, hence why some use 'God' as the subject which would be implied (or they are using the textual variant).

– [Dan](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/423/dan)

[Nov 26, 2014 at 8:28](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment27077_9271)

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## **4 Answers**

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**10**

I have been looking at this same verse the past few days. There are three important questions in my opinion for understanding this verse: (1) what is the subject of συνεργεῖ, (2) what is the syntax of the dative τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν, and (3) what is the syntax of πάντα?

The evidence indicates to me that the subject of the verb συνεργεῖ is the Holy Spirit and that the syntax of τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν is a dative of accompaniment (since συνεργεῖ is a συν- verb). This means that πάντα would be either a form of adverb or the direct object of συνεργεῖ.

If this is correct, a translation would be something like this, "Now we know that the Holy Spirit works together in all things with those who love God, who are called according to His purpose."

Let me give a few brief thoughts on why I translate it this way:

* In every use of συνεργεῖ in the NT, it is used as two subjects working together for a common goal. It usually takes a dative of accompaniment to indicate the second partner working together towards that goal (see Mark 16:20 and James 2:22 - and yes I know that Mark 16:20 is not a great reference for serious exegesis, but this verb s only used 5x in the NT, including the Mark 16 reference).
* As a result of the usage of συνεργεῖ above, it seems preferable to consider τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν as a dative of accompaniment rather than a dative of advantage, which is the chosen syntax in major translations (KJV, NIV, etc.).
* The concept of πάντα working together independently for our good seems theologically strange (i.e. if πάντα is the subject of συνεργεῖ). It could imply God working together behind the scenes, but on the surface this statement seems at odds with biblical theology.
* A stickier point is why "the Holy Spirit" would be preferred over "God" as the subject of συνεργεῖ. I am taking this from context. The preceding context of Romans 8 is discussing the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Romans 8:26-27 are discussing how the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer life. Therefore, when we reach Romans 8:28 the context is a discussion about the Holy Spirit and the believer working together. It seems natural that if the matter of Romans 8:28 is about us working with God or the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit would be preferred based upon context.
* I know that there is a textual variant that includes "God" as the subject of συνεργεῖ, but it is a non-preferred variant (that the NIV translators chose to use).

You asked above that someone consider internal and external evidence (textual variants, early commentators, etc.). I apologize. I do not have the necessary tools at my disposal. I live in a developing country with only a Greek New Testament and a few grammars. Someone else will have to address those other issues. What I have shared is what I see when I look at the Greek text.

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answered May 24, 2014 at 3:38

[[](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/4189/david)](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/4189/david)

[David](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/4189/david)

**121**33 bronze badges

* 1

Your observations at the very least have me pondering an option I had never considered before on this verse, particularly your note about two subjects used for συνεργεῖ, one indicated by the dative. I'll need to investigate that further in non-NT contextual uses.

– [ScottS](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/2070/scotts" \o "20,038 reputation)

[May 24, 2014 at 11:53](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment19777_9272)

* @David there is no need to update your answer (unless you want to); I just wanted to share some free tools that are available online that you may find helpful for future studies. First, there are tons of free books including commentaries at [archive.org](http://www.archive.org/) (e.g. [Denney's Romans Greek commentary on this passage](https://archive.org/stream/expositorsgreekt02nico#page/652/mode/1up)). Second, you can find TONS of free Christian works including the Church Fathers at [the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL)](http://www.ccel.org/). Just sharing some resources you might find helpful!

– [Dan](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/423/dan)

[May 24, 2014 at 22:35](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment19785_9272)

* In CCEL, if you go to the 'Study' a Scripture passage selection and select 'References' then go under Phillip Schaff you will find the Church Fathers on specific verses you search for - VERY helpful. For instance, [here's John Chrysostom's homily on this passage.](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf111.vii.xvii.html)

– [Dan](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/423/dan)

[May 24, 2014 at 22:38](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment19786_9272)

* David, wanted to comment on your answer but don't have sufficient reputation points, the story of my life;) Anyway... The New NIV has in its notes a similar option: "NIV note: (NIV) 9 ... or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good—with those who" Which fits the context of the previous two verses betterwhen correctly interpreted as: the believer searches his heart so that he can know the mind of the spirit and pray according to the will of God. Goyo Marquez El Centro California

– user5791

[Aug 26, 2014 at 17:29](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment24203_9272)

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**0**

I’m not sure what references you have already consulted but I figured I would share this nonetheless on the off chance it will be of use

I would direct your attention to the exegetical work of Frank Yon-Chao Lin, in this excerpt from pages 296-297. The Thesis is obviously much longer and Lin constructs his arguments in a greater context. However this portion may be of interest to you.

Based on the discussion above, **the interpretation of Rom 8:28 must be provided in the light of Rom 8:18-27 semantically**, though lexically it is more closely related to Rom 8:29-30. As Cranfield observes, “the purpose of vv. 28-30 was to underline the certainty of that hope of which vv. 17-27 had spoken. This certainty is indicated by the first part of v. 28.”795 Put otherwise, **Rom 8:28b (πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν) functions as a hinge, connecting Rom 8:18-27 with 8:28-30**; the phrase (τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν, “those who love God,” in Rom 8:28a) is a summarized designation of God’s children, who are the beneficiary of Rom 8:28b (“all things work together for good,” NRSV); Rom 8:28c (τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν, “to those who are called according to His purpose”) is a further clarification of Rom 8:28a. Finally, the unit Rom 8:29-30 extends the interpretation of Rom 8:28 (especially v. 28c) and makes a conclusion of the whole passage of Rom 8:18-30 (cf. Diagram 4-9 Text analysis of Romans 8:28-30). Like Rom 2:2 and 3:19, Rom 8:28 begins with οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι (“now we know that”), not only does the combination of οἴδαμεν and ὅτι imply that a widely familiar reality is acknowledged as true,796 but also the coordinating conjunction δέ indicates a close reasoning linkage of the following statements to the preceding texts.797 In particular, the well-known and accepted fact starts with τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεόν (“for those who love God”); the forward position of this phrase displays its prominence in Paul’s mind. Paul uses the verb ἀγαπάω, which expresses most fully the relationship between family members, to describe the relationship between the believers and God. Such a loving relation not only summarizes the God-pleasing response of the believers to God, but also reveals the reason why the believers become the recipient of πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν. Besides, owing to the believers’ love to God, which man- ifests the earlier love of God (cf. Rom 5:5), Paul is paving the way for his final con- clusion of the first eight chapters of Romans, in which God’s all-surpassing love is the focus (cf. Rom 8:31-39). **Cranfield lists and compares eight possibilities of the interpretation of πάντα συνεργεῖ**.798 Other scholars mostly divide all alternatives into three main catego- ries.799 The first category is to see πάντα as the subject, then Rom 8:28b can be translated as “all things work together for good” (e.g., ASV, NKJV, NRSV, KJV, Bar- rett,800 Cranfield,801 and Moo802). The second category is to adopt the long reading803 or **view God as the real subject behind the action of συνεργεῖ**. Under these circumstances, there are two options: **one is to read συνεργεῖ as transitive, thereby Rom 8:28b can be rendered as “God causes all things to work together for good”** (e.g., NASB); the other is to take Rom 8:28a **as an associative dative, συνεργεῖ as transitive, πάντα as an accusative of respect**, resulting in the following rendering of Rom 28b: “in all things God works for good with those who love him” (e.g., JB, NJB, NIV, TEV, RSV, Dodd,804 Gieniusz805).

And obviously given the references provided in the footnotes you may want to follow those leads.

[An Exegetical Study of Romans 8:12-30](http://59.120.53.21:8080/ir/bitstream/987654321/1303/1/Lin.+PhD+Thesis.+The+Spirit+of+Adoption.pdf)

Hopefully there is something that will help clarify the subject being God, personally I still think it’s unclear in the immediate verse but there are compelling arguments to be made.

———————————————————————————

## **Religious Hermeneutics**

When I read this verse, the emphasis doesn’t fall where you placed the emphasis, namely, is God doing the causing or do things work together “as a consequence”.

I personally don’t think using only this verse you can difinitely attribute God to be the subject of συνεργεῖ. You are correct to point this out. It’s not obvious in the Greek at all. As for why it was translated to make God the subject, it’s a Christian author to a Christian audience and the translators have an obligation toward their own audience to make the text clear without causing more confusion for the non Greek speaking reader. Translators sometimes use transliteration because they can’t find a more appropriate word but if the whole text were transliterated then it would serve no purpose. Take God out as the subject in the English and you have the NRSV as the closest translation. But translators also have the obligation of interpretation. Interpreting the text doesn’t only draw from the immediate passage in question as you well know.

(As a general rule when there is an obscure text I look for clear text elsewhere in Scripture so that the context is strictly from Scripture and not outside in the realm of abstract philosophical thought and probability. That way Scripture can speak for itself without external input. It helps against heresy.)

The emphasis in my mind falls on what qualifies someone for all things to work together for good.

## **Qualifiers**

Firstly it’s not open to every human, it’s only open to those who love God. That immediately cancels out the obvious,

* those who live in sin
* have not accepted His imputed righteousness
* and therefore have not been born again.

It also further qualifies amount those born again (those who love God)

“If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” 1 John‬

So Romans 8:28 is not even for all Christians, to use modern phrasing

Those that are in His will. You can be called but if you are not in His will, it doesn’t matter how much you love all your brothers and sisters, all things will not work together for your good, (whether that be caused by God or it takes place by some “natural law”).

In a sense the ambiguity in the Greek in my eyes is less relevant as the conditions that are necessary to qualify for the promise in the first portion of the verse.

If someone

* a) loves God
* b) is called
* c) is in God’s will

Then it’s hard to divorce God’s will from God’s actions.

## **Mirroring Passage**

Consider the passage in Matthew 6.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and **all these (good) things will be added to you**.”

Who does the adding?

“But if **God** so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will **He** not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

This chapter in Matthew also addresses the issue of loving God as does Romans 8:28 as well as servitude and being in His will (or purpose).

“"No one can **serve** two masters, for either he will **hate the one and love the other**, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Also there is a priority and a condition for God’s will (purpose)

“But seek **first** the kingdom **of God** and **his** righteousness”

## **Summary**

In light of a greater context, including the Matthew 6 illustrated above I would reason that Romans 8:28 should read **God causes** all things to work together for good,

...limited to those who love Him, are therefore born again, live in obedience, love their brethren and are in the will of God for which they were called.

God has no obligation to work anything for good to those who do not qualify. He may do it but He has not placed Himself under the obligation.

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[edited Jun 17, 2020 at 9:51](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/posts/38691/revisions)

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**1**

answered Jan 31, 2019 at 16:32

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[Nihil Sine Deo](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/28028/nihil-sine-deo)

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* 1

While this would be a great answer on a Christian religious site, this site focuses on the text and not adherence to any orthodoxy. This doesn’t answer the question, which would require both addressing the Greek syntax *and* the context of *this* specific passage (not other texts written later).

– [Dan](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/423/dan)

[Jan 31, 2019 at 16:34](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment75733_38691)

* 1

I would fully agree with you, if this stack was labeled textual criticism. But Hermeneutics can draw on multiple levels to reach the understanding of a text, including from its larger context - “Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the interpretation of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts. Modern hermeneutics includes both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as semiotics, presuppositions, and pre-understandings”. I may be completely wrong and if so I can delete my post voluntarily.

– [Nihil Sine Deo](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/28028/nihil-sine-deo)

[Jan 31, 2019 at 16:51](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment75736_38691)

* Thank you for explaining why you downvoted. I respect that and appreciate it.

– [Nihil Sine Deo](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/28028/nihil-sine-deo)

[Jan 31, 2019 at 16:53](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment75737_38691)

* @Dan I personally don’t think using only this verse you can difinitely attribute God to be the subject of συνεργεῖ. You are correct to point this out. It’s not obvious in the Greek at all. As for why it was translated to make God the subject, it’s a Christian author to a Christian audience and the translators have an obligation toward their own audience to make the text clear without causing more confusion for the non Greek speaking reader. Take God out as the subject in the English and you have the NRSV as the closest translation. But translators also have the obligation of interpretation.

– [Nihil Sine Deo](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/28028/nihil-sine-deo)

[Jan 31, 2019 at 17:31](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment75740_38691)

* 1

No problem. [This might be a helpful introduction to site distinctives](https://hermeneutics.meta.stackexchange.com/a/803/423).

– [Dan](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/users/423/dan)

[Jan 31, 2019 at 22:30](https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/9271/in-romans-828-do-all-things-work-together-or-does-god-work-all-things-togeth#comment75765_38691)

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**0**

In New Testament theology, "God works all things" and "all things working together for the good" are synonymous in their meaning anyway, number 1. Number 2, on the textual-critical side, "συνεργεῖ" is absolutely awkward if used as an active verb applied to God: how do you "together-work" all things? On the other hand, "to work together" is commonplace and understandable with reference to "all things."

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answered Feb 1, 2019 at 19:00

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**-1**

We know for those who love God, all work together for good, for those called according to purpose. The word sunergio (Strongs #4903) on all 4 other uses in the New Testament ( Mk 16:20, 1cir 16:16, 2Cor 6:1, and James 2:22) has to do with united in work in fellowship with those who love God . Considering that the subject is those who love God and God working within us who are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Aslo contextually it may also be God working within us to bring us to the conformity of Himself I believe when you study out the uses of sunergio you will realize a more proper meaning of this verse. Prisoners use this verse to justify their actions claiming it was God who was in control. To add "things" after all (pas) is wrong, especially considering it's not In the Greek scripture. Question: Does God cause us to sin? Of course not. We chose to. Does he cause or just allow? .