

## HANDLING LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES (AS THE CALLED OF GOD) (Romans 8:28-30)

### INTRODUCTION:

*Imagine this: your marriage is on the rocks. You lost your job. Your best friend isn't talking to you. You hurt your back. You are one month away from foreclosure on your home. Your child is sick. Your father died.*

These are some of life's difficulties many are going through. What about you?

Situations like these could be multiplied over and over. Whatever your circumstances that you are going through, our Romans passages gives some insight in handling life's difficulties as a child of God. Let me read the passage again:

**(Rom 8:28-30 NKJV) 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. {29} For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. {30} Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

The context starts back verse 17-18 where Paul writes:

**and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**

Paul is talking about suffering with Christ and being glorified together with Christ. To understand verses 28-30 we need to keep the context of suffering and glorification in mind. In our passage we see how God brings his children from suffering to glory or how a child of God is to handle suffering or difficult situations.

### CLAIM THE PROMISE OF HIS VERSE

First you are to claim the promise of verse 28.

**Verse 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.**

Notice that the promise of verse 28 is for those who love God and who are the called of God, so make sure that you qualify to claim the promise. Do you love God? Have you been called by God to trust in Jesus? Then you qualify.

Verse 28 is a very important promise. This is one of the most quoted verses in the NT. It stands right up there with John 3:16. But most of the time we don't see it in its context. We don't understand what the 'good' is. We don't understand fully God's purpose in the 'all things.' We don't know the foundation of the promise that "all things work together for good."

Let's look at this word 'good.' The verse is not saying that "all things are good." This would be denying the reality of sin, pain, tragedies, diseases, etc. These are not good. When we see crime and violence, we cannot call this good. When we see diseases and suffering, we cannot call this good. God did not create these things. They are the consequences of sin.

The verse is not saying that all things work OUT for good. Now if we are an optimist we can see a 'silver lining' in all things. But this is not talking about a 'silver lining.' There are many injustices in this world. No all things work out for good in that sense.!

Notice that the passage says that "all things work TOGETHER for good." There is a good end that all things are working together to accomplish. That good end has to be determined by God Himself, not ourselves. Everything that comes into our lives moves us towards that good end.

Let's look at the example of Joseph in the old Testament to see that God always makes all things work together for good. Remember the story of Joseph? His brothers sold him into slavery. He did not think that he would see his family again. This was bad. It was wrong for the brothers to do this and they were responsible for their evil deeds. But the Bible gives us a Romans 8:28 view of this event in Genesis 50:19,20. Joseph said to his family after they found him in Egypt.

**Do not be afraid, for am I not in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.**

To handle life's difficulties we are to remember that God is in control and that He only allows what happens to his own to work together for His good for you. In handling life's difficulties start by claiming the promise of this verse.

## **UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF GOD**

God is able to work all things together for good but the good is determined by God's purpose. Next we are to understand the ultimate purpose of God. Verse 28 again:

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

God calls us for a purpose. He has the end in mind. Not only do you know that all things work together for good but also you know that you are called by God according to His purpose.

What is God's purpose in calling us? What is God's good that all things work together for? Verse tells us:

**For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren.**

God's purpose for all things in your life is to conform you to the image of His Son. His ultimate purpose is that Christ might be the first born among many brethren. This being firstborn doesn't mean chronological birth but having the place of preeminence among the people of God. It is the same as Col 1:18

**And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

God's purpose in mind here is the conforming us to the image of His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. What a powerful understanding about God's will and ways. Everything can work together to make me more like Jesus. When we are going through a difficult situation we should ask ourselves, "How does my response to this situation make me more like Jesus?"

Paul says we are to think like Christ or have a Christ-like attitude. **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.." (Phil 2)**

John says we are to walk like Christ. **"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (I John 2)**

Galatians 4:19 says Christ is to be formed in our inner man. **"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you."**

God's goal for his children is to reflect a likeness of his Son Jesus Christ. Everything that God does for us is with this goal in mind, i.e. to conform me to the image of Christ that he might be revealed as the preeminent Son of God.

In handling life's difficulties remember God's purpose for your life – to conform you to the image of Christ. Ask yourself, "How can this situation make me more like Jesus?" This is help you bear the burdens.

**TRUST IN GOD'S UNBREAKABLE PROCESS OF ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL**

Next, in handling life's difficulties is to trust in God's unbreakable process of accomplishing His purpose in our life.

In verse 29 Paul begins speaking of the process, "**For whom He foreknew, He also predestined...**" Then in verse 30 he completes the unbreakable process.

**Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

*A building is only as sturdy as it's foundation. The bigger the building, the bigger needs to be the foundation. God's purpose for us is a big building and it has a big foundation.*

"For" indicates that verses 29-30 are the foundation for verse 28. They give reasons why we can trust that all things will work together for good for those who are called according to God's purpose. "For" whom He foreknew, God predestined, he called, he justified, He will glorify. God's sovereign power, wisdom, and love is the assurance that His good purpose will be fulfilled in you even though your present experience is difficult! You can trust that God's purpose will be accomplished.

These five terms in verses 29-30: foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified have been called "the 5 links in God's golden chain of redemption." These events link God's salvation with eternity past (foreknew, predestine), the historical present (called, justified), and eternity future (glorified). These are deeply theological terms, but let's not be afraid to wade into theological waters. For it is through such Biblical, theological concepts that we understand God and the greatness of His love for us.

**Foreknowledge.** God's foreknowledge is more than foresight, i.e. seeing what will happen in the future. That can be called a 'passive foreseeing.' God's foreknowledge is active, purposeful, and personal. "To know" someone in the Bible is a word that expresses intimate, loving, relational knowledge.

**Gen. 4:1 "Now Adam knew Eve his wife."** This is talking about the intimate marital relationship. **Amos 3:2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."** This is speaking about God's special intimate relationship with Israel.

When our Romans passage speaks of those whom God foreknew, it is speaking about a special, intimate, loving relationship where God has chosen those whom He commits Himself to before the foundation of the world.

**Predestinate.** God has a good plan for those whom he foreknew. What is this plan? It is to conform them to the image of Christ. God's eternal purpose is to

have a family of believers who bring glory to Him by revealing His Son Christ in and through their lives.

*We can liken God's foreknowledge and predestination to a sculptor who sees a rough piece of rock and can see the end product in his mind. Why? Because he has predetermined what it will look like and he has the skill to make it come to reality. The sculptor sets about selecting the rock, the tools and starts to work. In the end it looks like the pattern he had in his mind and in his plan.*

God is the heavenly sculptor who foreknew you and predetermined you end How does God carry out His plan in history? This is revealed in the next three word.

**Called.** Foreknowledge and predestinate are things God did before the creation of the world. The next two words describe historical acts of God in accomplishing His purpose. First he called those whom he foreknew and predestinated. God calls through the preaching of the Gospel and the conviction and regeneration of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart. This is God's efficacious call, as theologians put it.

**John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep." And in verse:27-28 Jesus continues and says "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."**

When Jesus calls his sheep they hear and respond by believing and receiving him.

**Justified.** Those whom he called, these he also justified. This is the message of Romans, chapter 3-5. This is the act of God declaring us righteous because of Christ's death on the cross and God giving us the righteousness of Christ.

**Glorified.** Glorification ends in our resurrection, but begins in the present with our sanctification. We have all received a new identity in Christ as God's righteous and holy children. Now God is working in and through us to bring our walk into line with our true nature. At the resurrection we will enter into the full glorification of being a child of God.

This is the end purpose of God – to bring us to the place where we will be glorified together with Christ. This brings us back to 8:17 **“and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”**

**CONCLUSION:**

This is God's unbreakable chain of redemption. This gives us the assurance that all things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. We can trust in God's sovereign chain of redemption to know that all things work together for good to those who love God. This gives the Christian strength to face, to endure, to go through any difficulties in life. When facing a difficult situation just remember Romans 8:28, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.**"

Do you believe it? Do you seek to see how your response makes you more like Christ? Do you trust in God's unbreakable chain of redemption? Then you can handle life's difficulties as one called by God.

**Amen? Amen!**