

All Things Work to the Good - Encouragement

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Scripture: Romans 8:25-30 (NIV)

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ 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.

Focus: verse 28, "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"

Introduction

Verse 28 is often quoted out of context. At the same time, it is also correctly used as a verse of comfort in difficult times.

Perhaps you have been asking these questions:

- Why did this happen to me?
- What did I do to deserve this?
- Why did he/she die?
- Will it ever end?

This morning, I want to work through this Scripture with you so that as we find an answer to these questions, and at the same time also find true and lasting comfort, security, and hope in these difficult times.

Bear with me, this is a "technical" or Bible study type message...

Body

To begin with, let's break the verse down a bit to understand what is being said:

And we

The word "and" tells us that this verse is linked to those that went before it. This verse, which introduces another source of comfort and support, is still part of Paul's teaching on "future glory."

At the same time, this verse is written in the present tense. In this sense, Paul is encouraging us in there here-and-now while we look forward to what is to come. If your only focus is on the here-and-now, then you are stuck!

Let's remind ourselves that God is present with us, and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. So it is with confidence that we can look forward with a Godly hope, knowing that things will not always be as they presently are. We can with confidence, commit our future—to God. We trust him with our salvation, we know He loves us, so let's also trust Him with our future.

That brings me to the "we." Who are the "we?" In context, Paul is referring to those who are born again – true Christians.

know

When we know something, there is no doubt. When you know something, you are factually convinced; you have a direct and practical understanding of things.

Paul in this passage is mindful of the fact of the Holy Spirit's presence and working in our lives. Our "knowing," as it relates to the future, is grounded in God, and not in anything of ourselves. So, how are we factually convinced; how do we get the direct and practical understanding that causes us to "know?"

We, who were once dead, but are now born again are living evidence. Let's read Ephesians 2:4 and 5, "*But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*" There are two clear phases to our lives: before and after salvation.

that in all things

The Greek for all things refers to: all, any, every, always and the whole. There are no exclusions. So, all of your illnesses, tests, mistreatments and disasters are included under “all.” Whatever you may be going through right now, whatever may be worrying you...it’s part of “all.”

No matter if you are growing tired or if the future seems challenging, know that it is part of the “all.”

God works

The obvious is that it is God at work, not us. But let’s develop our idea of “work.” “Work” means that whatever you are going through, all that you are worried about; the “all” that we just defined are in cooperation with one another and will play a part in your “good.”

It may not make much sense right now, but this “work” will teach you about life, they will teach you about God and produce in you, a humble spirit.

There are three verses that I need to share with you from the NIRV:

- Psalm 119:67, *“Before I went through suffering, I went down the wrong path. But now I obey your word.”*
- Psalm 119:71, *“It was good for me to suffer. That’s what helped me to understand your orders.”*
- Hebrews 12:11, *“No training seems pleasant at the time. In fact, it seems painful. But later on it produces a harvest of godliness and peace. It does that for those who have been trained by it.”*

It was the experience of the Psalmist, the writer of Hebrews, Jeremiah, and others that at the end of the day, it was good for them to be troubled. It is certainly not a “good feeling” or something we may enjoy when the going gets tough. In these times, let’s remind ourselves that the past, present and future are all part of a greater story and purpose.

for the good of those who love him,

The wording “for the good” speaks of both a reason and a result. It is a reason when it addresses the “because” and a result when it addresses the “good.” But there is a limitation in that both the reason and the result are exclusively for those who love God.

Our loving God is possible because He first loved us. Our love for God reflects His love for us and our love for Him is a characteristic of true believers. For us who truly love God, the hard times are a blessing. Albert Barnes describes how the ungodly view the same hardships that Christians experience:

- “Complaining, instead of peace;
- Rebellion, instead of submission;
- And anger, impatience, and hatred, instead of calmness, patience, and love.”

Romans 5:3-5, *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

In life, we all – Christians and non-believers – experience difficulties, hardship and trials. But because of the love of God active in our lives, and our love for God, the outcome for the believer is different to the non-believer:

- The unbeliever’s heart is hardened as he/she resists.
- The believer, in humility, does not doubt God’s love and knows that His grace is going to be sufficient while the greater purposes of God are being fulfilled.

who have been called according to his purpose

I love this piece of Scripture.

Let’s share some thoughts about God calling you; His choosing you. Let’s begin by reading the first sentence of Ephesians 1:4, *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”* Logically, God chose you before you chose Him. Firstly, you were not alive before the creation of the world and secondly, there is no foreseen action or condition we meet that can convince God to save us. Our previous – non born again – person was saturated with sin before a holy God. Simply put, you can’t

save yourself and you have no authority to force God or demand God to save you. You can read more in, for example, Romans 9:14-16.

The second part we must touch on here is the purposes of God. God does not save people without a purpose. God's ultimate design is eternal, not temporary – i.e., limited to our time on earth. Our God is a God of purpose. He created all things for His will so that He might accomplish His will, which according to Ephesians 1:9-10 is, *“he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”*

There are many books on knowing the will of God for our lives, but first and foremost, we need to know the will of God for God? God's will is focussed on Jesus that we should be reconciled through Jesus to Himself. You were created to glorify God, not only for your time on earth, but forever more.

The Burning Question

If God is good, and all things are for our good, why do bad things happen to good people?

Are we good?

Romans 3:10 states, “There is no one righteous, not even one.” Jesus in Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19 says, *“No one is good.”* Psalm 14:3 and 53:3 say the same thing, *“No one is good.”*

We are challenged to align our understanding and definition of “good” with what the Bible has to say on the topic and instead, ask the question, “why would a good God allow good things to happen to bad people?”

We have answered this question. God loves us and showed us His love, grace and mercy.

R.C. Sproul, when asked why do bad things happen to good people gave a deeply insightful answer, “That only happened once, and He volunteered.”

Conclusion

Let's read once again, Romans 8:28, “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.”

“For our good” may or may not include the absence of speed bumps and unexpected turns in the road of life. For our good is not the absence of hardship, trouble, difficulties, and persecution. “For our good” is not about plain sailing through life with many material blessings. “For our good” is the presence of God, the activity of God, to the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

Only when our will is aligned with the will of God; only when the purposes of God is at the top of our agenda; only when our lives are lived to His glory will “for our good” find its fullest meaning.

We’re saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed in Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

May the goodness that you experience, in fact, your whole life reflect this.

Amen.