

God Promises That All Things Work Together for Good

Opener: When have you seen someone foolishly adopt a Pollyanna attitude when a bad thing happened?

Scripture: We who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶In 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. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with God's will.

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:23-30

¹²Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. Philippians 1:12-14

Discussion Questions

1. Romans 8:23-27 lays the groundwork for us to understand Romans 8:28-30. How do verses 23-24 identify our ultimate hope? Recognizing what our ultimate hope is, how does the Holy Spirit help us as we wait for it to happen? Can you give an example of when something has happened that made it difficult to hang onto that hope but somehow you sensed that the Holy Spirit was interceding for you?
2. We quote Romans 8:28 often: "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." If that's true, are all bad things really good? Why or why not?
3. "Providence" is God's divine guidance or care that sustains and guides our destiny. "Fate" is something that unavoidably befalls someone—it's a done deal, not open to revision. Contrast those two concepts with what Paul had in mind in Romans 8:28.
4. When is it appropriate and inappropriate to quote Romans 8:28 to someone who is in a difficult situation? For example, would it encourage someone who just lost their job or had a fire in their home? If there are times when it is inappropriate does it mean Paul was wrong about how God works?
5. Paul wrote Romans 8:28 with authority because he had lived it out. Check out Philippians 1:12-14. How is what he described there a great example of what he wrote in Romans?
6. Romans 8:29-30 includes controversial concepts such as foreknowledge and predestination. Without getting mired down in controversy, how does God use the difficulties we experience to conform us to the image of His Son? How has God used something in your life to make you more like Jesus?

Wrap Up: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him." Those sixteen words are an optimist's delight. They seem to imply that no matter how horrible something is, somehow it's all good. But that's not what Paul meant. Paul's point was that God will use everything that happens—the good, the bad, and the ugly—to accomplish His purpose in our life. And what is that purpose? Transformation that chisels us into the perfect image of His Son.