

It's All Good – Romans 8:28-30

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *This Is Good*

1. There once was an African king who had a close friend he'd grown up with.
 - a. Throughout the years, they were inseparable.
 - b. But the friend had a habit that became somewhat *annoying*.
 - c. He responded to *every* situation, whether positive or negative, by saying, "This is good!"
2. When they went hunting the king's friend always loaded & prepared the guns for the king.
 - a. But on an expedition, apparently he'd done something wrong because when shooting one of the rifles, it blew off the king's thumb.
 - b. While bandaging his bloody hand, the friend remarked as usual, "You'll see, this is good."
 - c. To which the king replied, "No, this is **NOT** good!"
 - d. He was so *angry* he had the man sent to prison.
3. A year later, the king was hunting in an area he should have stayed clear of.
 - a. A tribe of cannibals captured & took him to their village.
 - b. They tied him up to a stake & piled up some wood.
4. Just as they were getting ready to set the wood on fire, someone noticed he was missing a thumb.
 - a. Superstition told them never to eat anyone that was less than whole.
 - b. So untying him, they sent him on his way.
5. As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb & felt bad for his treatment of his friend.
6. He immediately went to the prison to speak with him.
 - a. He said, "You were right. It *was good* my thumb was blown off."
 - b. He then recounted all that had happened --
 - c. Finishing with, "I'm so sorry for sending you to jail. It was *wrong* for me to do this."
7. The friend replied, "No, this *too* was good!"
8. The king was surprised by his friend's quick forgiveness & asked, "What do you mean, it was *good*? How could it be good that I sent you to prison for a year?"
9. The friend replied, "If I hadn't been *in jail*, I would've been with *you*."

B. *Romans 8*

1. In Romans 8, Paul describes what walking in the Spirit *means & looks* like.
2. In vs. 18-27, he says being saved means looking at life from a *different, eternal* perspective.
3. In v. 28 he makes that lesson most clear when he says -

II. TEXT

A. *V. 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.

1. There's a saying--"Familiarity breeds contempt."
 - a. Our repeated exposure to something can cause it to lose its importance to us.
 - b. We become so *used to it* by reason of repetition it ceases to hold value anymore.
2. *This verse* is in danger of falling into that category for many of us.
 - a. It's been quoted so many times in counseling & encouraging people we could easily fall into the trap of dismissing it as a trite religious platitude.
 - b. But it's a potent means of comfort precisely *because* it's *absolutely true!*

3. Look carefully at what Paul says –

And we know . . .

- a. There are 2 main words in Greek for knowledge.
 - 1) One refers to the knowledge we gain by personal experience.
I know a double-double at In & Out is good because I've had a few.
 - 2) The other word refers to knowledge gained by intuition or logical conclusion.
Think of a triangle. If I measure 1 angle at 90 degrees & another at 60 degrees, what does the 3rd angle HAVE to be? I didn't measure it – so I didn't experience a 30 degree angle, but I still KNOW it's 30 degrees.
 - b. The word Paul uses here for our knowledge is this 2nd word – we know this by reason of logical conclusion.
4. The verb tense it's in is a **present& continuing reality**, based on a **past event**.
As Americans, we **are free** of England, because we won the Revolutionary War **200 years ago**.
5. Paul says **right now & always** we can have absolute confidence everything is working together for good because Jesus **has conquered** sin & death.
6. It's going to take a while before the final redemption unfolds in history, but because of what's **already happened** at the cross & resurrection we know what the ultimate outcome is going to be.
 - a. God wins!
 - b. Every knee will bow & every tongue confess that Jesus Christ **is** Lord.

7. So → **What do we know?**

that all things work together for good

- a. When we look at the cross, here's what we see –
 - b. We see that **God loves us so much** there's no length He won't go to save us & make things right again.
 - c. We see that **God is so wise**, He knows exactly what to do & how to do it to defeat everything that would get in the way of His love.
 - d. We see that **God is so great**, no matter what the devil & rebel man do in trying to thwart Him, He's able to easily get around their puny attempts to freeze Him out.
 - e. Even more, He **takes up** their opposition into His plan & turns what they mean for evil to good.
 - f. No greater example of that is there than the cross.
 - 1) The devil thought it was his coup d' grace, his finishing touch that would forever lock God out of Earth.
 - 2) But the cross became the **key** that unlocked the chains of sin & the **coffin nail** in death's own casket.
 - 3) Instead of the Cross being a wall that kept God out–it became a bridge that allowed us back to Him.
8. Because God is all-powerful, all-wise, all knowing & perfect in love & goodness, He's able to take EVERYTHING & work it in such a way that it furthers His great, good plan.
 - a. He's not bound by time, so He's never late & never runs out of time.
 - b. Hiro Nakamura on *Heroes* has the ability to time travel.
 - 1) He can freeze time, then move around & do whatever he wants.
 - 2) He can move backward & forward & change things.
 - c. God is bound by neither time nor space. He knows the end from the beginning.
 - d. Nothing takes God by surprise since He already knows everything that's going to happen.
 - e. long ago He set things in motion to make sure that nothing would happen that would derail His plan for **both history & your story**.

9. The stories that illustrate this are many.
10. Many years ago, a believer lost his home & mill in a flash flood.
 - a. They were completely washed away.
 - b. Not wealthy, he was broken-hearted & discouraged as he surveyed his loss.
 - c. A twinkle in the rut where his mill used to be caught his eye. He looked closer to find that it was a large nugget of gold.
 - d. The stream had operated his mill. When it flooded it wiped out his house & mill but also uncovered an incredibly rich gold vein.
 - e. The disaster he thought had made him a beggar had actually made him rich.

There's an unusual monument in Enterprise, Alabama.

It honors the boll weevil, the little insect that *nearly destroyed* the cotton on which the town's economy once depended.

Before the boll weevil devastated the cotton, every family depended on cotton for its livelihood. But when the boll weevil struck, they looked for other crops & discovered that peanuts both provided a great source of income, & replenished the soil for even great cotton harvests.

So they made a memorial to the lowly boll weevil with a plaque that reads,

"In profound appreciation of the boll weevil and of what it has done as the herald of prosperity."

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11. Mayer – *Pain throws your heart to the ground – Love turns the whole thing around.*
No, it won't all go away – it should – But I know the heart of God is good.

12. This promise, this truth, isn't for all. It's for →

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

- a. While God is God **OF** all, He isn't God **TO** all; that is, they don't honor Him as their Master.
 - b. He loves & draws them, but He will not **force** them.
 - c. If they resist long enough, they cross an unseen line where He withdraws His gracious hand & leaves them to their rebellion & ruin.
 - d. So, all things **don't** work together for good in their case, because really, they don't **want** it to.
12. Look, it's simple: God IS good. If you reject Him, you're turning away from all that's **truly** good.

13. Paul doesn't leave **the good** all things are working together toward **undefined**.

- a. He says all things are working together for good **to those called** according to God's purpose.
- b. **What** that purpose is, is revealed in v. 29 . . .

B. V. 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.

1. You've heard it many times = **God loves you & has a wonderful plan for your life.**
2. Yes He does! And **here's** what **that plan** is. **Here's** His purpose for your life.

Here's what God is doing in you.

3. He's **restoring** you to His **original plan** for you by conforming you to the image of Jesus.
 4. All of us were **first born** in the **shattered image** of fallen humanity we inherited from Adam.
 5. But we've been **born again** to a new image of redeemed mankind.
 6. The Holy Spirit brings that image to life in us by infusing the very Life of Christ **in** us.
 7. His life shows us **how to live**; how to **really** live.
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8. Take careful note of **HOW** Paul explains this. He begins by saying God **knew ahead of time** who would come to faith in Him.
 - a. Of course He did! He's eternal.
 - b. He knows all things because He stands outside of time.

9. Then he says that those God knew would receive His grace, He **already had a plan** in place for them to grow in that grace & become more & more like Jesus.
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10. The word “predestined” bothers a lot of people because it seems unfair.
- They say, “If God loves everyone as John 3:16 says –
 - And if He **isn’t willing** that anyone perish, as 2 Peter 3:9 says –
 - How come He predestines some & not others?
11. Hold on—be careful here. Paul doesn’t say God predestines people to **salvation**.
- Who are the predestined in v. 29? **Those God foreknew**.
 - And staying in context, v. 28 identifies them **as those who love God & have responded to His call**.
12. What are those who love God predestined to?
- It’s **not** to salvation –
 - It’s to what comes **after; sanctification**, growing in Christ-likeness, spiritual maturity.
13. Think of it this way—You’re driving down the street one day & see a banner hanging on the front of a gym –
- “New Member Special: No Enrollment Fee & first 3 months free.”
 - That’s the call, the invitation. It’s the first week of January & you say “Wee-Hee!”
 - So you whip into the parking lot, walk in & sign up.
 - They interview you to see what your goals are, take a picture & give you a membership card.
 - They schedule you for 3 free months with a personal trainer. Your first session is in 2 days.
 - The trainer you’re assigned to gets a list of the people he’s going to be working with that week.
 - He sees your name & picture & looks at what your goals are.
 - Being the professional & expert he is, as he reads the interview & looks at your picture, he gets a good idea of what workout routine would be best for you.
 - He gets an idea of what you **ought to look like** at the end of 3 months & **makes a plan** to get you there.
 - 2 days later when you arrive for your 1st session, he begins to put you to work toward the objective.
14. Paul says God knows who will respond to His offer of new life.
- And that’s exactly what it is – **a new & different life**.
 - He has a perfect plan for each & every one of us.
 - He already sees what we will become when all is said & done & He’s at work in us by His Spirit to turn us into that glorious ideal.
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- d. Some of us have pictures of family & friends on our refrigerators from years & years ago.
- We look at them & it reminds us of the past, when we were younger.
 - In better shape, with more hair.
 - If God had a refrigerator, He’d have your picture on it, but it would be a picture of what you’ll be when the Holy Spirit has **finished** His glorious work.
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15. Paul knows his readers will want to know what God’s idea of perfection looks like.
16. So he gives them a hint – we will look like Jesus!
- That doesn’t mean we’re going to lose our **individuality or uniqueness**.
 - After all, individuality was God’s idea.
 - It’s the devil who wants to erase our uniqueness & turn the entire human race into an indistinguishable mass.
 - That’s what fashion & the media are all about –
 - Setting images before us that tell us to **be like this!**
 - Dress this way, drive this, listen to this, style it this way.
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- d. God's plan is to bring us into the *image of the infinite Christ*.
17. Conformity to Christ isn't restricting, it's liberating because it means becoming *all* God originally created us to be.
18. The life of the Spirit-led believer is the story of the *relentless work of God's grace* changing us from the poor lost souls we were into the glorious sons & daughters of God we shall ultimately be.
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19. Again, take careful notice of the last part of v. 29 where Paul says Jesus is **the firstborn among many brethren**.
20. Jesus is the *first & highest* of God's redeemed, new, glorious humanity.
21. But we fill out the sum of that new humanity.
22. The Christian life isn't a *solitary* adventure, a trip we make *solo*.
23. It's a pilgrimage we make *together*, side by side, encouraging one another to press on till the day we arrive safely home at Papa's house.

C. V. 30

1. Now—that explanation of the Spirit-led life would be enough for most people, but Paul knew there would be a few who'd want more info.
2. Like himself, they'd want to know a few more details about the *process* God uses to grow us up.
3. So he writes -
- Moreover whom He predestined,**
4. To be conformed to the image of Christ.
- these He also called;**
5. It all begins with God's call.
6. Our faith would accomplish absolutely nothing if there wasn't an objective offer from God for it to respond to.
7. Our salvation *begins* with God. He calls, *only then* can we respond.
- whom He called, these He also justified;**
8. The Bible is filled with God's *gracious call & appeal* to people to come to Him.
- **Psalm 34:8 • Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the one who trusts in Him!**
 - **John 7:37 • Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.**
 - **Revelation 22:17 • The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**
9. When a man, woman, or child responds in faith to God's call, in that very instant, the work of Christ on the Cross is applied to them and their sins are atoned for.
- a. They instantly move from being *condemned* to being *justified*.
 - b. A good way to think of justification is that it means, *just-as-if-I'd* never done it.
- and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**
10. This is the *perfect conclusion* to what begins in v. 18 as Paul tells us what our *perspective* on life ought to be.
11. He says the sufferings of the present are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall soon be eternally ours.
12. Here in v. 30, that glory which is God's end game *is so sure*, Paul speaks of it in the *past tense*.
13. God's plan for you & I to come to perfection is so sure Paul speaks of it as a done deal.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Outcome Is Sure*

1. If the New England Patriots play a Pop Warner football team – is there any doubt who's going to win?
 2. If the Boston Red Socks play a Northside T-ball team, is there any question who's going to prevail?
 3. If Steven Hawking takes a junior high physics quiz, is there any doubt what his grade will be?
 4. If the Spirit of Almighty God & the victorious resurrected Christ indwells you,
 - a. And He's determined to **protect** you & **prevail** IN you,
 - b. To work all things together so that they mold & shape you into the man or woman God had in mind before anything else was
 - c. Is it not certain **it's going to happen** – & that from God's perspective, it already has?
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B. *It's All Good*

1. Answer me out loud now

Is God good?

Is God's love perfect?

Is He all wise, all powerful & eternal?

Does not the cross PROVE that He will do whatever needs to be done to make sure you & I get to enjoy the benefits of His goodness, love, power, & wisdom?

Then know this – all things are working together for your good.

Even the hard things, the losses & sorrows.

Due to European intrigues. the Hungarian royal crown was kept by others for 23 years.

When it was returned, some said it was not the original crown.

The Chief Justice was sent to inspect it.

He was able to identify it by a tiny crack in one of the sapphires.

If the crown had not been slightly damaged, it would have been impossible to identify it correctly.

Even our failures, the things that seem to damage us, in the hand of God serve a useful purpose.

Christian – do you want to know what God is doing in your life?

He's making you more like Jesus.

On a wall near the main entrance to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, is a portrait with the inscription: "James Butler Bonham--no picture of him exists. This portrait is of his nephew, Major James Bonham, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom."

No portrait of Jesus exists either.

But God is at work in you & I to give this world a *likeness* of His Son who sets men & women free.