



# HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

The Goodness of God

January 19, 2020

Romans 8:28-30

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*<sup>28</sup> And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

*(Pastor prays)*

If I say to you, “God is good all the time,” do you know what you might say back? “All the time, God is good.” When the car won’t start and the washing machine floods and the insurance goes up, our God is good. When you get laid off, or when your interview goes bad, God is good. Or when you are sinned against, mistreated, victimized or abused, Is He still good? Is He good in Hospice? Is He good in the ICU or divorce court? Is He good when you want to be married but are still single? What event or tragedy or hurt is so profound that it would make you question the goodness of God?

I read this week that the number one reason people stop believing in God is human suffering. When you ask in the middle of something remarkably painful, “What possible good can there be in this?” I think that, at least in part, is what Paul is addressing in this passage. Let’s see it in context.

Chapter 8 assures us of so much. In verses 1-8 we are told that for those who are in Christ Jesus, there is now no condemnation. That was resolved at the cross of Jesus. And as a consequence of that, verses 9-11 tell us that to be a Christian means we are indwelt by the Spirit, and if we are indwelt by the Spirit, verses 14-16 assure us that we are indeed God’s children. As God’s children, verse 18 says we will share in a glory that is so marvelous it will make any hardship fade away. As we wait on that glory, verses 23-25 tell us that creation is

groaning, and we personally are groaning. And, as we groan, verse 27 tells us that the Holy Spirit in us intercedes with groaning too deep for words which now brings us to verse 28 that starts out with the phrase “we know” just like verse 22 does. So Chapter 8 has two Christian facts. The first is that we know all of creation groans. And secondly, we know that God is working all things together for those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. So the theme today is...

### **God is Always Good**

I want to give you four ironclad truths that can serve as solid ground under your feet this week when it feels like the world is falling apart and things aren't good.

#### **God never stops working**

This passage starts with God and ends with God. He is the unspoken subject in the verse just as He is the unseen hand in all of our daily affairs. You feel it in the wording of this passage. All things work together for good. Notice that phrase “work together” - Sunergo, synergy. God's working is not spasmodic or conditional. He doesn't show up sometimes and sometimes not. God doesn't show up after us and then clean up the mess. God is there at the beginning, at the end and in every point in between. This great verse reminds us that God never stops working. Right this second, he is doing 10 million unseen things all at once.

This is not some random hope that it will all work out. If I'm talking to you and I say to you, “It's gonna be fine” or “You're going to be fine,” I'm not offering you some bumper sticker false hope. I am saying that because of God's love shown to you in Jesus when He died on the cross and God powerfully raised Him from the dead, Because of that and your faith in that, our all-powerful God brings the full might of His unassailable majesty to work for His people. God is energetically, intentionally, ceaselessly working. He is tirelessly, purposely and actively working on your behalf. So I join the Psalmist in Psalm 121:1-4, *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? <sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. <sup>3</sup>He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. <sup>4</sup>Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.* We need to throw ourselves on His mercy, repent of your doubt and cling to the cross of Jesus. God never stops working.

#### **God never forgets His people**

Let's go back to the verse, read the whole thing and listen to the twin conditions. <sup>28</sup> *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

There are two descriptions of God's people. The first is those who love God. This is on the human side. This is the first and greatest commandment. It's what Jesus said in Mark 12:30, *"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."* This promise is for those whose lives are given over to an all-encompassing love for God. This is a real specific promise.

Paul is not expressing some superficial optimism that everything is going to work out for everyone. But Paul says, no, this is only for those who love God. That's the human side. What's the divine side? Remember what 1 John 4:19 says. *We love because he first loved us.*

Let's go back to verse 28 and see the divine side; see God working. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.* Here is the work of the Holy Spirit and the reason we can love God. This is grace and security and God's love for us in Jesus. When we pray for lost people, this is what we are praying for. It's what Peter said in 1 Peter 2, that God will call people out of darkness into His marvelous light. This is not just a general call but a specific call, a call that convinces us of our own sin and misery, a call that enlightens our minds to the need for forgiveness, the truth of the Gospel and the cross of Jesus. This call by the Spirit enables us to joyfully embrace Jesus.

What does it mean to be called? And, how do you know if you are among God's people, those that love God, the called? You will know because your heart and mind have been so thoroughly influenced by the Holy Spirit that you have become keenly, even painfully, aware of your own sinfulness. You understand your need for Christ - His life, His death on the cross and resurrection. And having been made aware of that, you embrace Him as Lord. And what God begins, He always finishes in you. This promise in verse 28 is exclusively for those who are in Christ. Those who love God and are called according to His purpose. There is great security here. God never stops working. God never forgets His people.

### **God never wastes anything**

You see it don't you? How bad I want you to believe it. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.* All things are not good. But, God is working and using everything. Look. **All** things. That's utterly

comprehensive with no qualifications or limits. Everything in the believer's life eventuates in good. We don't have a problem believing that God uses pleasant things. Our problem is with the suffering. It's not even the disciplined things, it's suffering that we struggle to understand.

But suffering teaches us 10 things: Patience, sympathy, humility, kindness, gentleness, closeness to God. We learn to hate our own sin; it teaches us to pray and to long for another world. And it teaches us what Paul learned, that God's grace is sufficient.

Corrie Ten Boon knew this. She grew up in the 1930's in a wonderful Christian home in the Netherlands. If you know anything about geopolitical history in the 30's and 40's, you know that Hitler's rise to power in the early 30's upset the fragile European peace. After his reoccupation of the Rhineland, all of Europe would fall to the Luftwaffe and Blitz warfare, including the Netherlands. Under German occupation, Corrie Ten Boon's father, because of his Christian convictions, started an underground railroad for the Jews and persecuted Christians. He had a secret room called "the Hiding Place." But they were soon found out and were sent to concentration camps. Her father and sister Betsie would die. But Corrie would still be able to say, "there is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still." Miraculously, Corrie Ten Boom survived, and she often quoted this hymn by Grant Tullar called "The Weaver" or "The Tapestry."

My life is but a weaving  
Between my God and me.  
I cannot choose the colors  
He weaveth steadily.  
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow;  
And I in foolish pride  
Forget He sees the upper  
And I the underside.  
Not 'til the loom is silent  
And the shuttles cease to fly  
Will God unroll the canvas  
And reveal the reason why.  
The dark threads are as needful  
In the weaver's skillful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver

In the pattern He has planned  
He knows, He loves, He cares;  
Nothing this truth can dim.  
He gives the very best to those  
Who leave the choice to Him

God never stops working. God never forgets His people. God never wastes anything.

### **God never makes a mistake**

Let's go back to the verse. *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

One thing we haven't defined is "good." What is the good that God brings about? What is His purpose? It's found in verse 29. *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* That's the good. God makes you into the image of Christ. That's sanctification. That's God's will. Isn't that what Paul said in Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Because God never stops working. God never forgets His people. God never wastes anything. God never makes a mistake. And we are reminded that our God is always good. And His best is given to us at the cross.

*(Pastor prays)*