

“All Things Work Together For Good”

“And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:18). Few verses have been more misunderstood or misused than this passage. To some, the verse says that all lives are interwoven by God and that no matter what evil or trial we suffer, God will make it turn out to our good. Thus, whenever great tragedies occur, horrible accidents, untimely accidents or deaths, these folks say to suffering ones, “It will work out for your good.” This is not what the verse teaches.

The “*all things*” of the verse cannot be pressed to include anything more than that of which the apostle wrote. It must be remembered that it is to them that love God that “*all things work together for good;*” that those who love God are those who are “*called according to his purpose.*” Moreover, the “*all things*” which work together for the good of them that love God includes the hope by which we are saved and the help the Spirit gives us with our infirmities (8:24, 26). The hope through which we are saved works together for our good. It causes us to press on despite “*seen*” things which seem to contradict our hope; and the frustrations of not knowing what to ask for, and sometimes not knowing how to ask, is offset by the assurance that these lacking things do not rule out that God knows what is the “*mind of the Spirit;*” that although we may be frustrated because of life’s ills and problems, if our basis is to please God and do His will, God who searches the hearts and knows both our heart’s intents and thoughts, recognizes the mind of the Spirit which is in us, if we love God.

Added to these two things which aid us is the apostle’s explanation of his words, “*to them that love God, all things work together for good.*” He assigns that statement to the following reasons: “*For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified*” (Rom. 8:29). Notice his process of reasoning: Foreknew, foreordained, called, justified, glorified. These are the “*all things*” of verse 28 for the assignment of reason is stated: “*for,*” “*because.*”

These are good, Biblical terms which unfortunately have taken on a meaning through Calvinism that is foreign to the Spirit’s intent. God foreknew, or knew beforehand. It was His intent to save some of mankind which intent was repeatedly stressed to Abraham: “*In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*” God’s foreknowledge was not a personal knowledge of each member of the human family; His foreknowledge was the purposing of

a remnant saved from sin's consequences. This saved remnant whom God "*foreknew*;" He foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son; they were to take on his character and nature that in so doing they would recognize the rightness of His life. Christ thus became the firstborn among many brethren; the Preeminent One. These whom God foreknew and foreordained, He called. That call is from God, is universal and comes through the gospel (1 Thess. 5:24; Titus 2:11; 2 Thess. 2:14). Those called have been called out of darkness and into his kingdom; having exercised their own free will by accepting the call by submitting to the conditions Christ prescribed (1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Thess. 2:12, Mk. 16:16). Those who are thus called, are justified and ultimately will be glorified. These five things -- foreknown, foreordained, called, justified and glorified describe the process of what has happened to those who love God. Who would dare dispute that to these that love God, all (these) work together for good? NEXT: "What Shall We Say To These Things?"

Jim McDonald