

Romans 8:28-30. 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. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

The Basics of the Christian Faith

One Word at a Time: Chosen

A few weeks ago, the Minnesota Twins celebrated the 30th anniversary of their World Series win in 1987. A few weeks before that the Milwaukee Brewers celebrated the 35th anniversary of their 1982 American League Championship. Members of those teams got together and remembered those glory days in a special celebration. In both cases the players and coaches and personnel all spoke fondly of the time they spent together and how it was such a delight to reconnect and rekindle a bond that felt more like family. There is something special about being on a winning team. Even the fans who were there, who cheered on the fans back then and again at this time felt a part of it and were encouraged and delighted as they came out in droves for these reunions and cheered loudly as they recalled the history and the glory of these teams. There is something special, something thrilling, about being connected to a winning team.

This week we held our annual soccer camp and on at least one of the days we talked how soccer is a team sport in which the whole team gets to rejoice in the victory. There is a certain glory, a certain joy in being connected to a winning team. Consider the elation of such a connection, the glory, the joy of winning a game, or winning a championship, and then multiply that by eternity. Such is the joy, the encouragement, given to God's people today in our lesson for from the book of Romans. As we continue our sermon series on the Basics of the Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: Our focus is on the word chosen and on the doctrine of predestination.

To sinners living in a sin heavy world, Paul gives us a few verses that are heavy on the gospel. In a world broken by sin things don't always work out the way that we plan. In previous sections of his letter Paul talks about how the world groans under the weight of sin, and we groan with it. Under the weight of sin, we cry out to God, sometimes not even having the words to say. Life is difficult. Sometimes we feel very much like we are on the losing end of life. We may become discouraged with life in general or discouraged in our faith. To sinners living in a sin heavy world, Paul gives us a few verses that are heavy on the gospel.

First, he speaks of how the Spirit helps us in our weakness. God knows what we need. God knows what we need, what we will ask for, and what is best for us. And now through the apostle Paul, God gives us these words of pure gospel assurance. 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. ²⁹ *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* ³⁰ *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.* Three verses packed full of pure Gospel; of divine assurance, of wondrous comfort, of eternal promise.

With these words God holds his people in his everlasting arms and promises us that, “Everything is going to be OK”. Confident because of their proven talent, a winning team, weathers the slumps and the struggles, by building on past success and looking ahead to the glory that they anticipate. A child of God does something similar, but has even more assurance and certainty. We know that everything is going to be OK, because our faith is built on the past successes of God and the sure anticipation of a heavenly glory that he has promised to those who believe. **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.**

How do we *know* that in all things God works for the good of those who love him? How do we *know* for sure? What information do we have that shows, the proves this rather monumental claim? God’s Word shows us how the LORD is patient and loving, all powerful and wise, and that he does what is best for his children. Even when his people cannot see it; he is doing what is best for them. Throughout Scripture, we see God watching over Abraham, and Jacob. We see him watching over his people Israel, and watching over Paul and the New Testament church. Perhaps the most remarkable and clearest example of God making all things work out together for good is the story of Joseph. Oh, the things Joseph had to go through. Bullied by his brothers, almost killed, then sold into slavery, the ups and downs of life in Potiphar’s house, wrongly imprisoned, and it is in that dreadful place God would work good. For in prison Joseph interpreted dreams, was forgot about, but then finally set free, only to be given a position of extreme honor that would set him up to save his family and an entire nation, preserving the line of the Savior. His brother intended to harm him, the LORD made it work out together for the good of many, many. And so, when Paul says we know; this is how we know. We have it on good information that this is how God works. We know, from the information given to us in the bible, we know from experience, this is who our God is. This is what he promises. Our God is the one who makes this claim, “***Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.***” This faithful and almighty God promises to his people to make all things work together for good. Maybe we have even been blessed to see that in our life, to see and taste the goodness of God as he worked something good out something difficult in your life. Hardship reminds us that we can’t do it all ourselves. Hardship reminds us that we need God. Hardship reminds us that we need each other. Hardship can be an opportunity to help each other, to volunteer our time, our energy, our efforts, our prayers.

In times of natural disasters towns come together. In times of physical hardship God’s people rally around individuals. Small town benefits, and special memorial meals

and other such events that we know about, that we have experienced, and have been are part of, these testify and are examples of how God can make all things work together for good.

But did you notice what is not in that sentence. It may not necessarily for *our immediate* good. We might not personally or immediately see the good, or realize the good in our life. That good might be worked out in someone else's life. The way that we handle hardship and strife might prove to be a blessing, something good for our children, or our neighbor, or even a stranger. God is working on a much larger scale, scope, than just your life, my life.

And of course, there is always the eternal scheme of things for us as God's people to consider. For even greater benefit than any amount of earthly aid or temporary assistance; greater than any cash donation or home construction, is the inheritance, the treasures, the eternal mansions that God has prepared for those who love him. Hardships and difficulties in life, may work together toward the good of reminding us what is truly important, that we are citizens of another kingdom and heaven is our home. No value or merit that we obtained or earned before God. Instead simply by his grace, his undeserved love we sinners we called to him. By his goodness and love alone we are born again by water and the word. We are declared righteous. We are made at one with God. By his grace, we lost and condemned creatures, are brought into this holy family. We are children of God, sons and daughters of the almighty king, because this is his good and gracious will. We are princes and princesses, who by the goodness of God are blessed to be those who are born into this royal line and are waiting for our crown, for our royal inheritance for our place in the palace of heaven. And to his dearly loved children, God gives this promise. For God's children, for God's people, all things work together, for our *eternal* good; and what better good could there be!

During soccer camp this week, a young boy, came and stayed with his grandmother for the week. This particular camper's grandfather died rather suddenly last year. And during the time out here this past week, this young boy and his grandmother went to the gravesite. At one point the boy wondered out loud, "*Why would Jesus die on the cross?*" And as he was processing all of this and what he heard at camp in response the boy himself offered this answer. *Jesus died so that grandpa could have eternal life.* In a moment of beautiful childlike faith, the boy recalled how Jesus saves, how Jesus saves us from death and grants eternal life to those who believe.

This is the wonderful assurance that God gives to us. This is the message of great worth, this is the eternal treasure that God grants to us. Not even death, not even that most miserable hardship of death can harm us. God takes death and makes even this evil, hurtful thing, work out for our good. Jesus takes death and makes it the doorway to eternity. Our Savior's death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, works this wonderful miracle for us, we are given the gift of eternal life. How wonderful this truth is: **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him,**

And so, in this world heavy with sin, we are given this message that is heavy on grace and good news. We know that everything is going to be OK, because our faith is built on the faithfulness of God and the sure anticipation of a heavenly glory that he has promised to those who believe. In his great love for us, he knew us from before the beginning. In his great love for us, God has called us to a winning team, he has called us, drafted us, through water and the word onto his club, into his kingdom. In his good and loving purpose, he brings us to faith creates a connection within the body of believers that does not only feel like family, but he flat out calls us family; and as family we are together heirs of the eternal victory, the eternal inheritance, and glory that Jesus has won for us, and we enjoy that victory together. In his undeserved love, in his loving purpose, in his timeless grace, grace that we can never hope to fully understand God the Father calls us to be his own, he calls sinners to be his sons and daughters. And this is all made possible by Jesus. Jesus became our brother, he took on our mortal likeness, he became true man and lived a perfect life for us, died and rose from the dead. And just as he rose from the dead, so too will we. Just as he lives now for all eternity in the endless joys of heaven, so too will we. And he did this so that we may take on his eternal likeness, that we might live in a glorified state in the glory of heaven. Free from all that is bad and evil, hurtful and harmful, we will know the eternal good of heaven. In this world made heavy by sin and its troubles, this is the heavy dose of good news, of pure gospel, that God gives us to lift our spirits, to make our burdens lighter, and to give us a taste of the eternal victory that is ours through Christ. ***29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

God knew you from the beginning. He knows you now. He knows the burdens that you are bearing, and in his love, he bears you up with this words of assurance and comfort, of promise and victory. You are his and he will never leave you. He has called you to be his own. He has washed and cleansed you from your sin, and he has set you apart in his good purpose. He has declared you holy and righteous in Christ. And there is something special, something thrilling, about being a member of this team, of this family, we share in Christ's glorious victory. Just as Jesus lives now for all eternity in the endless joys of heaven, so too will we.

Consider the elation of such a connection, and then multiply that by eternity. Jesus saves! Jesus gives us the victory. Jesus has called sinners like us to be his brothers and sisters, to be sons and daughters of the almighty God and live with him forever in heaven. With childlike faith consider this good news that surpasses our human understanding, and marvel at the awesome love of the God that we love because he first loved us. Before time was he knew you, he knows you know, he will know you in glory. We know that everything is going to be OK, because our faith is built on the faithfulness of God and the sure anticipation of a heavenly glory that he has promised to those who believe. We know that everything is going to be OK because in a word, we are *chosen*. Amen.