**ALL THINGS FOR GOOD**

**Romans 8:28-30 – Leader Retreat – July 6-8, 2017**

**INTRODUCTION**

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones born 1899 to Welsh grocer.

* At 11 family lost nearly everything in fire; at 19 his brother died flu epidemic.
* First education and career was as a medical doctor but didn't last long.
* Felt call to preach and at 28 took a church in southern Wales.
* Calvinistic Methodist Church—best of both; rooted in doctrines of grace but heavy emphasis on *experiencing* Christ.
* After a decade or so took a call to assist G. Campbell Morgan at Westminster Chapel, Evangelical Free Church in London.
* Day before he started war broke out in Europe.
* At that time served as president of I-V Fellowship of Students.
* After only a few years took over as sole pastor of Westminster Chapel.
* One of the hallmarks of his ministry was a Friday night service expositional.
* Halfway through his 25 years as pastor began Romans.
* Eventually preach 372 sermons[[1]](#footnote-1) on Romans and have to stop at 14:17 because of sickness.
* In 1961-1962 he preached on Rom 8:17-39 w 17 sermons on 8:28-30.
* He wrote in the printed edition of these sermons[[2]](#footnote-2):

"The verses considered in it are generally agreed to be one of the sublimest[[3]](#footnote-3) portions of scripture. In it the Apostle brings his argument concerning assurance of salvation to a grand climax. The way in which he advances surely from argument to argument, piling one upon another, is astonishing, and constitutes the supreme example of inspired logic. In doing so he brings us face to face with the fundamental theme of the Bible—God's plan and purpose of redemption conceived before time and the foundation of the world, and spanning the whole of human history from the original creation to the final glory. What is perhaps most astonishing of all is that all this was done out of a primary pastoral concern, the Apostle's main object being to comfort and to help those early Christians in Rome who were enduring what he calls "the sufferings of this present time."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 8:17-39*

"Inspired logic" to bring comfort in the "sufferings of this present time."

Read 8:28-30 and pray that God with his surgeon's scalpel meet us…

Sermon: (1) God works all things for our good (v. 28). We know that because…

* (2) He predestined us to be conformed to Christ (v. 29)
* (3) He predestined us for glory (v. 30)

**1. GOD WORKS ALL THINGS FOR OUR GOOD**

The key statement is given in verse 28.

* "And we know" (28) vs. "we do not know" (v. 26).
* Critical to know what we can know and know we cannot know.
* Sometimes our ignorance is because we haven't studied an issue or don't know about a particular text.
* Sometimes our ignorance is because something is a true mystery.

Lloyd-Jones[[4]](#footnote-4) 🡪

"I do not know which way to turn or to go; I do not understand why these things are happening, and I do not know exactly what to ask for at this moment. But I know this, that in spite of my ignorance, and in spite of everything that is happening to me, this and everything else is working together for my good." That is the final comfort and consolation of the Christian.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 8:17-39*

"ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD" (8:28)

* "ALL" means *all*.
* Those 8:18 "sufferings of this present time" and 5:3 "tribulations"
* Sins we commit, sins others commit against us
* All these things are part of what God is working together for our good.

If "all means all" then as Tim Keller reminds us, *all things happen to Christians*.

* Trap to think that only good things happen to Christians.
* Or that if we're good enough or obedient enough, things will get better.
* Bible = obedience brings blessing + Christians suffer
* Your Christianity will get deformed if you forget either of these.

Lloyd-Jones (163, 164)[[5]](#footnote-5) 🡪

When the Apostle says 'all things' I believe he means all things literally. He means good things, favorable things; but he also means things that seem to be against us, things that seem to be bad for us, things that are discouraging, disheartening, dispiriting. He includes all. In the end, of course, it amounts to much the same—all things, even those which seem to be most adverse….We can say, then, that 'all things' are working together for our good—good things, bad things, trials, troubles, tribulations, illnesses, accidents, disappointments, even failure. God can make all, and does make all, work ultimately for our good. This is surely a staggering statement; but it is the statement that is made by the Apostles.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans 8:17-39*

Only possible for God make all things together for good if sovereign over all.

* God can't use shape "all things for our good" unless he shapes all things!
* C.E.B. Cranfield (*Romans 1-8,* 428-429) 🡪

The reason why all things thus assist believers is, of course, that God is in control of all things. The faith expressed here is faith not in things but in God. Why, then, it may be asked, does Paul make 'all things,' and not 'God,' the subject of his sentence? It is, we suggest, because he wants to draw attention to the transcendent power of Him who helps us. His power, His authority, is such that all things, even the actions of those who are disobedient and set themselves against Him, must subserve His will….No evil which happens to the God-fearing or the good man can really harm him, but that all things, even those which seem most adverse and are most painful, must somehow result in good for him.

C.E.B Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*

But it isn't good as WE DEFINE IT, but as God defines it.

* Brad Hambrick speaks of an equation we create because of 8:28 🡪

*My lesson/opportunity > my sin/suffering*

* God is gracious and sometimes the lesson and opportunity is evident.
* One author on this passage talked about his hearing loss after seminary.
* Forced him to refuse jobs.
* Eventually total deafness but enabled him to concentrate on writing/study.
* It was a blessing to him.
* But not everyone hard thing in our life can be traced to a lesson/opportunity.
* My father died when I was 20.
* God brought good, but equation doesn't work from human perspective.
* Critical that we let GOD DEFINE THE GOOD and the TIMELINE.
* Could be that our equation is right but the timeline far different than expect.

Five "goods" that the Bible gives for suffering:

* Character (Heb 12:3-11) God's discipl "yields peaceful fruit of righteousn."
* Experience of God (2 Cor 12:7-10) "My grace is sufficient for you"
* Glory of God (John 9) Man born blind for the glory of God
* Minister to others (2 Cor 1) comfort others with comfort we've received
* Testimony – different life stories glorify God differently – thief on the cross vs. Daniel in the Bible

Example in nature

* American Museum of Natural History describing exhibit
* "The Power of Poison"
* Poison of pit viper helps with hypertension, saliva of vampire bats produces an anti-clotting agent
* Likewise, God's sovereignty takes the "poison" of the world and makes it "medicine" for us…

BUT IT'S ONLY FOR CHRISTIANS.

* Only for those who "love God" and are "called according to his purpose."
* A Christian is one who "loves God"—"the whole of true religion" (Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 425)—"the most elementary and the highest mark" of the Christian (John Murray, *Romans 1-8*, 314)
* A Christian is one "called"—that inward, irresistible call of the Spirit!
* The believer and unbeliever both experience "all things."
* The Christian can claim and know—it's for my good!
* The non-Christian has no such confidence—could be for his destruction.

Paul's claim is a bold one and a challenging one.

* He wants to ground his statement in something even more amazing.
* Two truths about our predestination that help us believe all things for good.

**2. HE PREDESTINED US TO BE CONFORMED TO CHRIST**

Paul now takes us on a journey through time to see God's purpose in our lives.

* The point is for us to have more confidence that God is working good *now*.
* To get confidence for the present Paul walks us to the top of the mtn.
* Like summit hike buried in trees then…the view!!!
* Paul is saying, don't get buried, lift your head and look around!
* Let's look into eternity!

FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW HE ALSO PREDESTINED…

* If you just look at the word "foreknew" it gives the impression that it means to "know beforehand," as if God knew something from eternity.
* But "foreknowledge" in this passage is much more than that.
* Of course he knows everything that will happen.
* But that's not what is in view here.
* God "foreknowing" us means that God "foreloved" us.
* It has to do with God setting his love and affection on us from eternity past.
* God to Abraham about Isaac 🡪

For I have chosen [Heb., "known"] him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." (Gen 18:19)

* Not just that God knows the difference between people and chooses us because of that difference.
* It is that the way God knows us creates that difference.
* Passage gives it away, because not everyone is foreknown in this way.

THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BE CONFORMED…

* Once God set his love and affection on us, then he PREDESTINED us for a purpose.
* The word itself is helpful: *PRE-DESTINE*
* "Set our destiny beforehand."
* Determined, mapped it out, planned it.
* When you and I do that, who knows?—our plans to leave for vacation but then car problem delayed us a day!
* When God does it, *it is finished!*

But purpose we are destined for has do with being changed into image of Christ.

* PREDESTINED TO BE CONFORMED… (v. 29)
* How do we know that all things will work out for good?
* Because from eternity past God predestined us to be like Christ!
* "All things" are like the sandpaper, chisels God using to shape us into Christ.
* D. Edmond Hiebert, the scholar eventually totally deaf, said…

This blessed hope—that believers will be conformed to the image of His own Son—explains God's dealings with them as His chosen sons in this present age. He is ever at work to reproduce the moral image of Christ in them. All that now comes into their lives He uses for their good to further that glorious goal. His aim for them now is not to make them happy, materially prosperous, or famous, but to make them Christlike. He now uses "all things," the sad as well as the glad, the painful as well as the pleasant, the things that perplex and disappoint as well as the things they eagerly strive and pray for, to further His eternal purpose for them. In His infinite wisdom He knows what is needed to bring about that transformation. For some of His own He may need to use hotter fire and strike with harder blows than in His dealings with others to effect the formation of Christ's image in them. This may be because some believers may be more resistant to His moulding activities or are more prone to insist on their own efforts.

D. Edmond Hiebert, "Romans 8:28-29 and the Assurance of the Believer"[[6]](#footnote-6)

Becoming like Christ is God's goal for us but also God's goal for Christ.

* God's purpose and plan is not simply for us to be like him.
* It's also to bring us into the family of God.
* Christ is to be the "firstborn among many brothers" (v. 29).
* Calling Christ the "firstborn" means that he gets the greater glory, the greater inheritance, the greater honor.
* But we are "many brothers."
* He is greater—but we are still in the family!
* In fact, 8:17 says that we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."
* He is the firstborn and we are not, but we still share in his inheritance.
* Whole thing is designed so that we are infinitely and eternally blessed but Christ's glory is supreme.

How can we know that God is working good for us right now?

* Because we are being made into the image of Christ.
* And we have been brought into the family of God with Christ as the firstborn.

But Paul the tour guide isn't finished.

* There is more he wants to show us.
* Our PREDESTINATION has more to it.
* Verse 29 looked into eternity past.
* Verse 30 looks into our eternal future.

**3. HE PREDESTINED US FOR GLORY**

The second reason we can have confidence is that all things are working for good is God's eternal plan for us.

* RC Sproul has called this the "golden chain" of our salvation.
* It teaches us how individual, how specific, how intentional is God's salvation.
* And in the end it tells us that God and God alone gets the glory for it.

Starts with our predestination.

* The first link in this golden chain is God's plan for us in eternity past.
* The rest of the links in the chain are the unfolding of that eternal plan.
* Helpful to see first three together: PREDESTINED—CALLED—JUSTIFIED
* Only those justified are called, only those called are predestined.
* Not everyone is justified, so we know not everyone called in this way.
* Has to do with the moment God spoke inwardly to call us to himself.
* Maybe in your case the gospel call went out to a whole room of people, but you responded.
* Everyone heard the gospel call, only you heard the inward, effectual call.

When that inward, irresistible call went out, you responded in faith.

* Then you were justified.
* God declared you to be righteous.
* Despite a lifetime of sin and rebellion against him he declared you to be righteous.
* All of your sin was taken away, the very righteousness of Christ was accounted to you!
* 2 Corinthians 5:21 🡪

2 Cor 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

* And like Bruce explained—NOW ***NO*** CONDEMNATION!!!!
* JI PACKER, *KNOWING GOD* (273) 🡪

Nobody can alter God's decision over his head—there is only one Judge!—and nobody can produce new evidence of your depravity that will make God change his mind. For God justified you with (so to speak) his eyes open. He knew the worst about you at the time when he accepted you for Jesus' sake; and the verdict passed then was, and is, final.

JI Packer, *Knowing God*

Being declared righteous is amazing, but the *golden chain* does not stop there!

* We are also to be "*glorified*"
* Body&soul right now is diseased with the filth of a fallen world.
* One day we will be glorified.
* Body&soul will be cleansed all trace of fallen world gone.
* Disease and death? Gone!!!
* Sin will become a distant memory instead of a daily battle.

And notice that this future event is spoken of in the past tense.

* Paul uses the Greek aorist and shouldn't miss the power.
* So certain is your future glorification that Paul can speak of it as if it's past.
* Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC, 333-334)

So certain is it that it can be spoken of as already accomplished. It is in the plan of God, and that means that it is as good as here.

Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*

**CONCLUSION**

God is working all things for our good

* We know that because from before time he loved us and predestined us to be like his Son—and to be part of his family!
* We know that because his plans for us began in eternity past and continue unbroken and immovable into eternity future!

Tim Keller 🡪

At the most practical level, we have the crucial assurance that even wickedness and tragedy, which we know was not part of God's original design, is nonetheless being woven into a wise plan. So the promise of Romans 8, "that all things work together for good," is an incomparable comfort to believers.

Tim Keller, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*[[7]](#footnote-7)

And again from Keller 🡪

Paul tells us that if we follow Christ, our bad things turn out for good, our good things cannot be lost, and our best things are yet to come.

Tim Keller, "The Christian's Happiness"

Our response: FAITH!

* Faith is not saying a bad thing is a good thing…
* Faith is not necessarily seeing the good that God is working…
* Faith is saying only that God is working for our good—that God is good!

Prayer

Song: *Sovereign Over Us*

1. Oct 7, 1955 to Mar 1, 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Romans 8:17-39*, xi [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. of such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration or awe. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Romans 8:17-39: The Final Perseverance of the Saints*, 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Murray 🡪 "Not one detail works ultimately for evil to the people of God; in the end only good will be their lot" (*The Epistle to the Romans,* I:314). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Riverhead Books, 2013, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)