

Romans 8:28



This time with Coffee Cup Bible, we're going to be looking at Romans 8:28. And it's a pretty well-known verse and a verse that's often used as encouragement when people are going through difficult times. It says, "We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." Now, there's some different translations of this verse that kind of mean the same thing, but they say it in a little bit of a different way. The NIV says, "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."

It really means the same thing, but a couple of translations translate more in the direction of the NIV to show that it's not the things that are working towards your goodness; it's God using the things to work towards the good of those who love him. It's kind of a nitpicky thing, but I think it is also important to understand that it's not that all things are naturally moving in this good direction or that these things are somehow naturally coming together. No. It's God's divine intervention in the world, in this sin broken world, to take all these bad things and the good things as well and move and work them all together for the good of those who love him.

And note that "all things" then means all things. It even includes our sin – that God is going to somehow use our sin for the good of us in some way. Notice that the verbs "works" and "love" are both present tense. Not that God did work all things together for good or that it's for those who have said at one point that they loved him. It's a present thing. "God is working all things together for those who are loving him" would maybe be a way to understand what that means.

And I want to point out that Paul is not saying that everything is good. Paul very explicitly throughout his letters notes that things can be very, very bad. Even in this passage, just a few verses earlier in verse 18, he writes, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us." And so, in this passage, he's probably looking back to that as well, that it's not all good things at all, but there are some very big sufferings.

But he's looking at it from an eternal perspective. And in that case, we need to define good from God's perspective. Now how we see goodness might not be equivalent to how God sees goodness. And we might not always see how God is working all things together for our good, and we might disagree that it's for our good. But when we trust that this verse is true and we understand goodness from an eternal, outside of our time, God perspective, we can trust that all things are working together for good.

Even if we don't agree, even if we don't see it, even if we're just confused and angered by it, we can put our hope in this verse. We need to understand too that Paul is not making any sort of point about how much we need to love God by noting "for those who love God" in this verse. He's not saying that God will work all things together for good if you love him enough or if things aren't going good that you need to love him more. He's just making a point of all Christians everywhere. "Those who love God" is just referring to Christians.

And we can hold on to the promise that comes in the two following verses that "Those he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son so that he would be the firstborn among many



brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called, and those he called, he also justified, and those he justified, he also glorified.”

That's the promise. Not just that bad things will work out somehow for our good, but that God has this entire process in his hands, and he's working to sanctify us, and he will glorify us in the end. So, we can hang on to the hope that is in these verses. And going all the way back to verse 18 that our present sufferings are not even worth comparing to the glory that God has in store for us.

And so, a couple discussion questions to get you going as you discuss this video. First, in what ways is it really difficult for you to trust this passage? It's easy in theory, but when we're talking in practice, it can be very difficult. So, in what ways is it hard for you to actually trust the good news of this passage?

And second, do you actually believe that God is working in your everyday life? If you do, how? Like, what does that look like practically? And if you don't, why not? What's holding you back from truly believing that truth?