

# Hope in Difficult Times

Romans 8:26-30

## Introduction

I read a wonderful book this week, *The Noticer*, by Andy Andrews, and it caused me to look over my life and recall the worst events and experiences I have faced. At the end of that activity, God reminded me of a very familiar, but critically important passage for us to have in mind as we are faced with difficult times.

One of the truths that we try to avoid, but have to live with, is that we are all either in a crisis, just coming out of a crisis, or on our way into a crisis. It's a part of life. It's a result of the fall. But it's also part of God's plan for us.

Let's look at our passage, one that is overflowing with hope for us, and see what we can discern about difficult times in general, and in turn be challenged to reevaluate difficult times in our lives in the light of God's plan.

## Bible Passage

Romans 8:26-30 - <sup>26</sup>And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; <sup>27</sup>and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup>And we know that **God causes all things to work** together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

<sup>29</sup>For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; <sup>30</sup>and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

KJV And we know that **all things work** together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

NIV 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.

## Bible Study

Beginning in verse 18, Paul deals with the inevitability of suffering. All of creation suffers because of sin. It groans. And so do we. But he finishes the paragraph claiming that we should have hope in suffering – maybe even especially in suffering!

Why? Our passage begins Paul's answer to that question. We should hope because of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Often we don't know what is going on or why we are experiencing difficult times, but God does, and His Holy Spirit prays before the Father on our behalf, that God's will for our lives will happen.

And a better understanding of God's will should give us hope.

Let's look closely at verse 28:

"We know..." – It's a given.

"...God causes all things..." or just "...all things..."? It's a tough call. There's good manuscript evidence for either. But does it really matter? God's working is at least implicit if not explicit. Either way, God is the cause.

What is included in "all things"? \_\_\_\_\_

"...work together..." – Contribute toward, help bring about.

"...for good..." – Ultimate good. Who else but God could take the tragedies we experience and make them turn out for good?

"...to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." – In our lives. And it is an intentional hook to the next two verses. **Read them.**

What is God's will for your life? **Be conformed to the image of Christ!** \_\_\_\_\_

What does that mean? \_\_\_\_\_

Doesn't it also mean that we, like Christ, fulfill our role in His plan? **That we do something?**

## Practical Application

We've discussed before that I do not focus on topics related to sovereignty and free will in our class because I believe it is one of those issues that will always have an unresolvable tension between two apparently opposing truths, and I have seen a focus on it cause more damage than good. Teachers just can't seem to say, "I don't know." But this passage demands we discuss it, so we will, but only with a focus on the hope it should give us, as is Paul's point.

I remember when I was preaching through the book of Romans on Sunday nights at our church in TX. I was using Chuck Swindoll's tapes and commentaries as a primary resource for my preparation. He helped me bring together the two sides of the debate between Arminianism and (hyper-) Calvinism in a way I had never understood before. He said, **"Do you want to know what God's will is for your life? The only way we can know the will of**

God is to look back at our lives and see what has happened to us. That is the will of God."

Think about that. Think about what it means for the suffering, tragedies, mistreatment, failures, bad choices, etc., that have been so painful and still haunt you when you think about them.

Joseph is a great example of someone who had the right perspective on suffering and mistreatment. It was that perspective that gave him hope throughout the long road to his ultimate purpose, and that kept him from hating his brothers and seeking revenge for their actions. It is what, in fact, that allowed him to live a life of peace and forgiveness throughout the ordeal.

What was the worst thing that you have ever been though? Think of the five worst things you have ever experienced. Did they make sense at the time? Would you be who or where you are today if they hadn't happened? Can you today see the good that has come from those experiences?

Recall again the quote from Charles Swindoll. Think also about what it means for your future. You need to seek God with all your heart, purpose to be more like Jesus, and make the wisest choices you can. But then, you need to trust it into God's hands. His plan for you is better than you can ever know.

### **Conclusion:**

We should reevaluate the worst events of our lives from the perspective of this passage.

Our trust in the goodness of God and our awareness in His involvement in our lives should give us hope to travel through times of difficulty with confidence and expectation, instead of fear and despair. That would be a perspective of faith.