

For The Greatest Good

For centuries, Romans 8:28 has been a favorite Scripture: “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.” Many find great comfort in it. Unfortunately, many do not understand this Scripture and doubt God when tragedy strikes their lives. In fact, it is one of the most misunderstood, misused, and misapplied verses in the Bible. People use this verse to say that if you love God, all things in this life are going to work out for you, but this is not what is being taught. A close examination and deeper understanding of this verse, however, gives us even greater comfort, because what is happening in our life is contributing to the greatest good in existence.

To begin with, we need to understand what this verse isn't saying. First, we must understand that God is not the source of tragic events in our lives – this is the claim of Calvinistic predestination. This doctrine makes God guilty of everything that happens including the evil that is in the world. What an insult to God!

Tragedy is part of life and the natural world. Second, we must understand Christians will not be spared pain and suffering in this life (cf. Romans 8:35-39). Now, let's look at what the verse means. The phrase “according to His purpose” is an adverbial phrase (in the Greek language). This means it must modify a noun of which the only one is “works.” This means the works are done according to the purpose of God (i.e., God works every-thing together for the good of His purpose). This verse is not saying everything is going to be pleasant and work out all right; it is saying that God will use your life for the good of His purpose – even your sufferings. In other words, if we trust God He will even use our sufferings for good. Perhaps the best translation of this verse is found in the Revised Standard Version (RSV): “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.”

Romans 8:28 has nothing to do with God making good things happen; it has nothing to do with God preventing bad things from happening; it has everything to do with God being by your side in the midst of the tragedy, to comfort you and strengthen you. If we trust God, all things in our life whether good or bad can be used to contribute to His purpose – the greatest good of all.

Donald