

“God Works For Your Good” (Romans 8:28-30)

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

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Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: The Attack on the Good God

- A. Expressed in the basic so-called “problem of evil”
- B. C.S. Lewis in his book *The Problem of Pain* outlines it this way (keep in mind that Lewis sets out to answer this so-called “problem,” but here he is simply presenting the seeming dilemma):
 - 1. If God is all-good, he wants his creatures to be happy.
 - 2. And if he is all-powerful, he can do whatever he wants.
 - 3. But the creatures are not happy.
 - 4. Therefore God lacks either goodness or power or both.
- C. You see the problem. If #4 is true, then this contradicts the existence of an all-good and all-powerful God.
- D. This is compelling to people because:
 - 1. This is major grounds for atheism.
 - 2. Pain and evil are universally experienced. How many of us have experienced a tragedy and not been tempted to ask (or did ask), “How could God let this happen?!”
- E. The so-called “problem,” however, **has problems**:
 - 1. First, evil is not a substance that God created. It is not from God. It is as St. Augustine taught a **privation** of good. That is, through sin and the evil one, evil comes upon God’s good creation and deprives the good creation of its wholeness and goodness (like a perversion or an injury). **God isn’t responsible for this.**
 - 2. But why would God “allow” this to happen? Answer: so that people made in His image could love Him. Without the potential for evil, there could be no people (with free-agency to choose to love God). There is no such thing as “forced” love. That would be robotic. *In other words, the only way we could have the chance to love God and love each other is if God made us with the ability to choose between good and evil.*
 - 3. Secondly, **God has done something about the evil!** First and foremost, He sent His Son to do something about it!
 - a. Not only does Jesus **join us** in our pain and suffering (this in itself is a crucial point), but He also
 - b. does something about it **through His life, death, and resurrection.**

Illustration: An Eastern Orthodox icon that shows the risen Christ pulling up Adam and Eve from the grave. Jesus has come to do something about all evil and death itself!



c. In fact, this is what Scripture teaches:

1st John 3:8b: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

4. However, there’s more to what God does in response to evil, and this is what our text today in Romans 8 is about.

Transition: But we must pause here and realize that this is precisely where our sin comes out. We are extraordinary skeptics. Evil occurs and we give up all faith! We suffer and we assume the worst about God! Something goes wrong, and we blame God! Things don’t work out and we rebel and step away from the Lord! We don’t put the best construction on things, but we prefer putting on the worst construction. We throw a pity party and God does not get glory for His promise to work good, but God gets the blame that we believe everything is lost and has fallen apart. Forget all that optimistic stuff about the glass being half-full; as far as we are concerned when we suffer the glass is smashed, all hope is gone, and God is nowhere to be seen!

Part I: But God Works Good Through ALL Things!

Romans 8:28: “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

- A. First, make sure you know what is “good” ...good is not simply what you want or prefer.
- B. That which is truly good is consistent with the will of God in your life. His good and gracious will.
- C. In fact on account of our sin, we resist what is truly good for us.
 1. On a purely physical level I know that it is very bad for me to engage in certain eating habits and yet I often eat what is bad for me. God informs me as to what is good for my body, but I frequently go the opposite direction! Last Monday I needed to minister on my day off, but poor me as I added unnecessary stress on myself, I just couldn’t help myself: After the call, I pulled over on the way to another appointment to have a maple bar and chocolate donut...what was that all about?!
 2. On a spiritual level, we do this all the time. We don’t really believe God is working good, so we neglect the spiritual resources He offers and we cut ourselves off from their benefit!
- D. But what is good includes:
 1. Whatever it takes to lead us to repentance!

2nd Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

- a. So God allows us time, even if it is time spent going astray to get to the point of realizing that we need repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin and rebellion against God, and turning towards following the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b. Often this process includes being disciplined. First we consider our Savior!

Hebrews 12:3: “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”

Then at verse 11 the Lord teaches us this:

Hebrews 12:11: “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Part II: God Uses “All Things” for Our Good.

- A. “All” means all!
- B. Even bad things. Bad things don’t become good things!
- C. However, even through the bad stuff, God works through these in such a way as to lead us to repentance, discipline, and faith! There is always a reason even when we don’t see it!
- D. When we know this, then we can also say with St. Paul:

Romans 8:18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

- E. Point blank: our current trials won’t even be remembered in glory!

Part III: But How Can You Know That This is True for YOU?!

- A. Because Romans 8:28 says that this is true because you’ve been CALLED. Did you see that word in the verse?

Romans 8:28: “...for those who are called...”

- B. Have you been called? Answer (and I’m going to sound like the cell phone guy in those commercials a while back): “Can you hear me now?” Listen to the call: Jesus loves you, Jesus lived for you, Jesus died for you, Jesus rose for you, Jesus prays for you, Jesus is your Savior! Hear the call: **believe in Him!** Have you been called? Yes, you’ve been called by the Word of Christ that gives you faith!
- C. You can know this with absolute certainty!

Romans 8:29: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

- 1. In Christ, God foreknew that you would be covered with Christ.
- 2. In Christ, God also predestined that you would be saved!
- D. But how do you know you’re predestined?

Romans 8:30: “And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

- 1. We are back to the call. God is calling you now just as He called you when you were baptized!
- 2. What is the basis for that call? YOU HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED.
- 3. On account of Christ, God declares you righteous! Justified in His sight because of what Jesus has done for you!

Romans 5:8: “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- E. He died for you, therefore you are forgiven and now He calls you so that you would know that ALL things, not just some things, will work out for your GOOD! In Christ, this is guaranteed!