

Last Sunday at 7:43 A.M. I got a text on my IPHONE that said, “Can you call me as soon as possible, Nancy. When I got the text I was on my way to church. At the time I thought it was from a Nancy I knew in Bay City, who was presently in the psych ward at Bay Medical Center. I thought, she’s safe, I’ll call her after church today. However, this was not the Nancy who had called me. I found out from my wife immediately after church was over that it was Nancy Peil. My wife proceeded to tell me that Nancy’s husband was killed late Saturday night.. She and her husband were holding hands walking back to their car at 11:30 P.M. when a van struck down and killed her husband. I felt really bad, and called Nancy Peil immediately. She was in shock. During our conversation, I shared the passage from our text today, “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.” Why are these powerful and comforting words? Let’s find out how rich we really are and that: “Everything Works Together For Our Good!”

I know that some of you here this morning have been in Nancy’s place not too long ago. I know someone at Open Bible whose son was killed on 9-11 while working in the Pentagon. I know a member of Open Bible who lost a son at a very young age. I know a member of Open Bible who is dealing with the effects of a stroke, and several who are dealing with cancer. Don’t you people look around at times and think to yourself:, How could God allow these things to happen to me? How could this possibly be for good? But they are. They are for our good, and we can say that with confidence and with strength

It’s very interesting to see how Paul begins this section here. He doesn’t say, “It would be nice if God works for good,” or “We sure hope that God works for good” or “Usually God works for good.” Rather he states, “We know that in all things God works for the good.” Every time that Paul uses this phrase we know, in Romans he uses it to introduce something that is a given, something that is a well known fact to the people. For example I might say, “We know that God is all-powerful” or “We know that life is difficult.” Those are just givens, they are facts to us that we know for sure. So Paul says, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” It’s a given. It’s a fact. It’s just something we Christians know.

There’s another interesting aspect to this phrase. The word for know here is a word that is used for knowledge that comes from experience. In other words, it’s a knowing that sometimes you have to learn. Often it is as we get older in life that we can look back at the things that have happened to us and see that it did turn out for good, that God did know what he was doing. So as we gain this knowledge from experience, we can have more confidence with new troubles that we face that God is still working for good.

I still think back to when I received my inheritance from my mother years ago. How I was greedy and wanted to make more money. So I put some of the money into the commodity futures market, orange juice futures, here in Florida, and lost it all. God taught me a lesson for my good. He taught me to be a better steward of the blessings he had given to me. Experience, seeing how he worked in the past, I know he has good in mind with whatever happens to me.

Make sure that you don’t miss another completely important word in that first sentence.

The word all. God doesn't work a few things or some things for our good. God works all things for our good. Again, it's a given. It's a fact. Note for whom things work out for good: "for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Namely Christians. And Christians only! It probably didn't seem like good for Joseph to be sold by his brothers into slavery and hauled off to Egypt. But he later became second in command behind Pharaoh and delivered his family from starving in a famine. It probably didn't seem like good to Job, to lose everything—family, possessions, health. But he first of all learned quickly to put his trust in the Almighty God. What is more, we even find out at the end of the book of Job that God blessed him with double what he had in the first place! Those who have been called according to God's purpose of being his children and spending eternity with him—that means we who are Christians.

We might read that, we might say that, we might know that, but it sure is hard to believe sometimes, isn't it? When airplanes were used as weapons of mass destruction in New York City, D.C., and Pennsylvania, those Christians involved might have found it hard to believe that it was for good. When the diagnosis is done and the prognosis is bad, it becomes challenging to see it as good. When you're getting older and more things ache and more things hurt and life is challenging and all your financial security for the future disappears into thin air, it is difficult to believe that it is for good. And when a Nancy Peil suddenly finds her husband killed, we might begin to worry, wonder, and doubt these confident words that Paul wrote.

Paul proves why we can know this with such sureness and confidence. He does so in the next two verses. Verse 29 says, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." To foreknow simply means to know beforehand. God foreknew you. Think about that for a moment. With all the billions and billions of people that live in the world now, and all the billions and billions of people that have lived before us, God still knew you beforehand. His knowledge is so great that he even knew you before creation. He knew who you would be and what you would do. He knew that you would be his dear child. And if his knowledge is that great and vast, he certainly knows what things are for your good.

But God did more than just know us beforehand, Paul says he also predestined us. To predestine means to set apart and make distinct. We might think of a cattle rancher that sets a fence around his cattle. He sets them apart. He makes them distinct. He protects them as his own. That's what God has done. Long before we were born, long before creation, God set a fence around us to mark us as his special children. He has marked us as ones that would, "be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." This is truly an amazing thing. Consider this—if God knew you beforehand and knew who you would be and what you would do, that means he also knew ahead of time the wrongs you would do. Long before we were even born he knew that we would be born in sin like everyone else. He knew that everything we do would be corrupted and tainted with evil. He knew our greedy selfishness. He knew all our bad words. He knew all our wicked and shameful thoughts. God knows everything and so he knew everything that you and I would do. Long before he knew just

how completely deserving of the fiery blasts of hell we would be. Yet, he still set his fence around us. He still predestined us to be his own children and to be conformed and changed to be like his Son, Jesus.

It is by our faith that we become changed and conformed. Our faith connects us to what Jesus has done. Jesus was never greedy or arrogant or self-reliant. Jesus never pushed his father to the side. He never said bad words or had bad thoughts. He was perfect in everything he did. He was perfect in his life and in his love—so perfect that he wanted to give that life for you and me. By shedding his blood and dying on the cross, he removed all our guilt and carried all our wrongs, forgiving everything we have ever done. Thus, we have been changed and conformed. Through our faith in God's great grace and mercy through Jesus we have been conformed to his likeness so that we can actually be considered Jesus' brothers and sisters. That is the first reason why we know everything will work together for good.. God predestined us and set his fence around us to be his own and to be washed clean in Jesus' blood.

Knowing that he loved us that much, we also know that he loves us enough to work all things for our good. Paul continues in verse 30, "And those he predestined, he also called." God did not stop at simply setting his fence around us (predestining us), hoping his herd would make it to heaven. He made his salvation very personal as he also called us. Note how Paul does not say that God gave us the opportunity to choose him. Paul does not in any way give us credit by saying we had to choose Jesus and choose his forgiveness. The Bible says, "You did not choose me, I chose you." Through the Gospel, God called us to faith to be his own and to believe what Jesus has done.

What has Jesus done? Paul continues, "those he called, he also justified." Remember that justification is a courtroom term. It means to acquit or declare innocent. God hasn't just predestined and set his fence around you. God hasn't just called you to believe and have certain false hopes. He has called you to believe in the factual thing he has done through his Son. He has declared you not guilty and innocent of all your sin. Jesus took your place and took your guilt. God has justified you.

There's a fourth and final amazing part to Paul's reasons for confidence: "Those he justified, he also glorified." Our achy backs and joints and our tiresome jobs and our feeble economy might not make us feel glorified at all. But the wonderful truth is that God views you as being in heaven already. So sure is God's setting a fence around you, so sure is your calling, so sure is your justification through Jesus that God already considers you as being with him in eternal glory in heaven. He looks at you and me and only sees Jesus' life and perfection, and so he sees us as we soon will be in heaven—completely glorified.

I don't know about you, but when something bad happens to me, I'm always looking up at God and saying, "Ok, what are you trying to teach me with this? Are you driving me more into your arms? Are you creating more patience in me? Are you letting me be an example to others? One thing I do know, Its definitely for my Good. Help me always to firmly believe this, Lord!