



This week at Magdalen Road Church we slowed right down in our series in Romans eight focusing in on v28 to v30. The context for this little paragraph is that Paul is now beginning to deal - in light of our hope - with some of our concerns and doubts. , and so we had 2 points

#### 1. God IS Good (v28)

The claim that Paul makes in this verse is extraordinary. Some of us we wrestle from a philosophical or hypothetical stance (as we try and understand why or whether God is at work in the dark times) for others though it's very raw and so this verse might hit us hard not philosophically but in terms of concerns and doubts. Some questions:

- **Who is this a promise for?**

It's a promise for those who love him. It doesn't mean that God doesn't do good things in the lives of people who don't love him (he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous - Matt 5) but the frankly extraordinary idea of this verse is it God shapes all events in the lives of Christians for our ultimate good.

Which means we need to now ask

- **what definition of 'good' is Paul working from here?**

v29 and 30 Help us out. Gods ultimate good purpose for us is to be conformed into the likeness of Jesus, to be glorified. There is an inevitability to this, it's as if we're on an escalator that we can't leave. God is using all of life in all of the universe for us to reach that final glorified state.

Which means this is a different definition of 'good' than we often use. We talked about it perhaps feeling a little bit like taking the kids to McDonald's and encouraging them to sit at the table and to trust you - and it rather than bringing them a McFlurry and a milkshake you bring them a bag of apples a side salad and water, for their "greater good."(!) Paul is not quite as unkind as this, but perhaps our tastes do need to be refined.

Very often what we desire in life may not be what is ultimately best for us. The selfish self from previous weeks, the me-me-monster can be noisy and persuasive, and we think we know what good means for us and yet we are working from an old definition. God is much more concerned with our Christ likeness than with our comfort. He has a bigger agenda which is ultimately more important and more satisfying - in shaping you into the likeness of his son. God is playing the long game.

We noted that this principle is at work in the Scriptures more than we think. Evil is present, powerful and painful and yet it can never escape Gods sovereign control as he uses it for his big and good purpose in our lives.

We noted the example of Joseph in Genesis who despite being sold into slavery in Egypt and subsequently years in prison, he is able to say to his brothers at the very end (50v20) that where they intended to harm him God intended it for good. We see a similar pattern at the cross. Jesus's death was evil committed by wicked people for wicked purposes and yet it was also the best thing that ever happened in history.

It is as if God is a miraculous musical composer who takes the nasty jarring discords of life - the things, the people, the experiences that we long to be gone and yet amazingly shapes him into a beautiful symphony. Or he is an extraordinary artist who takes all the most disgusting colours in the palette and yet when he applies him to the canvas there appears a magnificent masterpiece.

Our problem can be from where we are sitting it feels like a cacophony of discords or a mess on the canvas. If thats our problem can be in that context we need to perhaps (1) patience. Sometimes (usually?) God's timescale is not like ours and (2) perspective. Sometimes (but not always) from a wider perspective we can see something of what God is doing.

#### 2. God WILL get us home (v29-30)

These two verses may raise more questions for us, yet Paul's desire was that they would give us assurance. It's a chain of five links with each link tightly forged to the next:

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**Foreknew – predestined – called – justified – glorified**

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This is God's plan and where we make plans that don't work he always completes his plans because (1) he doesn't change his mind and (2) nothing is outside of his control This is gods plan.

**Foreknew** : For God to 'know' people is more than just that he could pass an exam on you, but his foreknowledge has ideas of watching over and caring for us. **Predestined** : God ordained that we should hear the gospel and so we were predestined. Predestination does not mean that we can just do whatever we want but rather that it should be a basis for transformation. Remember the context-we are not condemned, we've changed families, we say no to the selfish self and so we're to chase after the Christ-likeness that our father has called us to. **Called** : Gods call in the Bible is not something that we can ignore but rather it's irresistible. And though we might have felt as though we were reaching out to find God, or returning to him, Paul sees beyond this and explains that in fact God was calling us to himself. How else can we explain the fact that we were evasive sinners Who have finally admitted that God knows best? He called us compellingly. **Justified** : To be justified means to be made right with him. People like us who sin and walk out on him and wonder off Have been forgiven. We are no longer condemned. God loves us in a costly way. **Glorified** : Paul wants us to know that our resurrection glory is already assured, the connection between justification and glorification is unbreakable. It is a done deal- Gods plans are good and certain and we can trust him.

What Paul has done is he scans the enormous stage of Gods loving purposes and plans from eternity past to eternity future and he says if God is guiding his eternal plan for our glory (v29 - v30) then he must be guiding our daily experiences for our good (v28).

If he's got the great big glorious picture of salvation in his hands? Well then he's got the little messy picture of our lives in his hands too.

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Here are a few questions to help your group begin to apply this

- How do these verses give us assurance?
- What definition of 'good' do we work from?
- How does the example of Joseph in Genesis help us understand what's going on here?
- When do we doubt these truths? Why Do we doubt them?