

²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (NIV 84)

Theme: In God all things turn for our Good.

You have a big project at work. You and a few of your co-workers have been working on it for quite a while but the deadline is approaching and you can't quite figure it out; you've come across a major problem and you might have to start over from square-one. You not sure what to do—you're at an impasse; your job is riding on the work that your group does—your livelihood and that of your family is at stake. But then someone else comes into the meeting room, someone who it seems has no knowledge of your project, and says, "Don't worry about it; I'll take care of everything." "Really, are you sure?" someone replies. He responds, "trust me, I've got this." Do you trust him? It really all depends what you know about the person. Even then, I don't think too many people would trust this man to do your job without asking him a bunch of questions and making sure he knows what he is doing! And if all your questions are satisfactorily answered, then you might trust him.

What does it mean to trust? It can be used as a synonym for belief or faith—if you trust someone then you believe that they exist and that you have faith that they can do what they say they can do. You can also use the terms 'rely' or 'confidence' to define trust. You trust or have confidence in a surgeon's knowledge and abilities before you let him cut you open. You rely on the expertise and the honesty of your financial planner as you let him play around with your money. And you rely on God to guard and protect you from all harm and danger.

Every day many things happen in your life—good things and bad things, things that make you happy, angry, sad, or indifferent. Things happen all around us and to us and those we love constantly. It's not

the good things that often cause us problems, it's not the blessings given to us by God; but it's the bad things—or at least the things that we think are bad, things that cause us to suffer: things like sickness, disease, death, being reject by loved ones, being let-down by friends, or simply the overall wickedness of this world. Or maybe it's not something that is particularly good or bad—something happened that didn't go as you wanted it to go

Maybe you caused the problem; it is your fault that these things happened to you. It is something you did or didn't do, something you said, or forgot about, or simply plain just messed-up; and now you have to suffer through the consequences of your actions. Maybe you had nothing to do with it; it was a situation that was out of your control. Or perhaps, someone even did it to you—on purpose, they sought to hurt or harm you in some manner. You are suffering now because of the sins of others.

When bad things happen, when things don't go the way you want them to go, when you suffer because of something you or someone else did or didn't do, how do you react? Often it's in a negative way; and there are a number of different ways we can negatively react—The first thing many often do is complain. The "woe is me" attitude, you complain about how horrible your life is. And this may lead you to fall into despair. You become distraught and upset, and you wonder why you always have to suffer, why bad things always happen to you. You tell yourself that it will always be this way, and to some extent you'd be right because you live in a world full of sin and are surrounded by sinners. You come to the conclusion that no one cares much about you or loves you.

And this may lead to complaining about God—at least to yourself. "Why doesn't God love me, why doesn't God take care of me? If he can do all things and if he really does love me as he claims to, then why does he allow bad things to happen to me time and time again. Maybe God can't do all things, maybe he has lost control, or maybe he just doesn't care enough about me to keep all the bad things away." The devil uses such doubt against us. "Maybe he can't take care of me, maybe things won't get better. Maybe I need to stop worrying about God so much and what he wants me to do, and take care of

myself. Maybe I just need to work harder, keep more money to myself, do what pleases me; take care of myself first—that will make me happier, and overall my life will be better.”

But there is a better way to react. The first verse of our text is a verse that has been comforting Christians ever since the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write them almost 2000 years ago, **we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.** All things work out for good—All things, not just the good things, not just the many blessings that God gives us, but all things work out for good. That includes the bad things, the things that seem like they are bad at least. Whatever causes you pain and sorrow, the sicknesses, the accidents, the money problems, family issues, all the many things that didn’t go your way, that didn’t turn out as you wanted it to—they will all turn out for good; everything will turn out for good.

For your good, that is for your eternal well-being. This is much more comforting than “everything happens for a reason.” This is saying that God is in complete control. This side of heaven, we’re ignorant of how much bad the Lord keeps away from us and how he keeps the bad things in our life from becoming even worse. No matter what happens, God will make it turn out for our good, everything that happens to us will turn out for our benefit. Your sickness or disease: good; the sudden death of a loved one: good; you losing a job: good; others mistreating you: good; financial problems: good; family issues: good. You get the point—whatever problem, whatever sorrow you have, in the end it will turn out for good!

That’s a promise of God and so we know it is true. But God doesn’t promise that we’ll ever see the bad turn into good. Sure, we may realize it relatively soon, or it could be years down the road that you finally realize it as you look back at how your life turned out. Or it may even be that we never see the good until we get to heaven. We see things from underneath, like looking on the back side of a quilt—things look messy and unorganized. Rarely do we get a good look at the beautiful tapestry being created by our God. So we trust that God knows what he is doing and will do what he says! God saying everything turns out for our good, is God telling us, “trust me,

I’ve got this.” God knows all and can do all, and promises to make all turn out for our good. So we trust him him—we rely on him and have confidence in him, no matter how messy it may look from down here. Case in point: Christ’s suffering and death. That looked messy, didn’t it? Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples, arrested and put on trial by his own countrymen, many of whom were religious figures. Jesus was mocked and spit upon; beaten and crowned with thorns; he was flogged and finally nailed to a cross upon which he died.

But God used that bad for good. He used the greed and selfishness of Judas, the hardness of heart of the Jewish Leaders, and the lack of leadership and integrity of Pilate to bring about Jesus’ death. It was God’s will that Jesus died and something that Jesus did willingly. It seemed messy, but it turned out for good. For by his death Christ paid for our sins and three days after his death the Lord rose from the dead and gives us his ultimate victory. God turns bad into good!

Even when it seems impossible for any good to come out of a situation, God finds a way to make it turn out for good. Think about our lessons today: Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers—God allowed the bad to happen, but he turned that bad into good by leading Joseph to become the 2nd in command of all of Egypt and thus save many lives, including those of his family and keeping the line of the Savior intact. Or in our gospel for this morning, when Peter’s mother-in-law became sick and near death; but Jesus showed us a glimpse of his glory by healing her from her sickness. In every situation, God makes good out of bad.

Here’s even more comfort for you: God knew who you were before you even existed, before he ever created the world he knew you personally. And those whom God foreknew, he also predestined. That means that God has appointed you to eternal life so that you would share in the glory of Christ. And those God predestined he also chose, that is, he fulfilled in time what he had decided in eternity to accomplish—he called you through faith through the gospel that you would receive everything he has done to save you. And those whom he called, he also justified—this is God’s act of declaring us not guilty on account of Christ, we are saved by him and him alone without anything we have ever done. And finally those he justified he also

glorified. For us our glorification is in the future, when we die we will join him in heaven where we will share in his glory.

In verse 18 Paul writes, **our present sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us.** One of the reasons why this is true is because God makes whatever we suffer through into good; and no matter what happens in our lives we will be in heaven; God has chosen us to be saved and so we will live with him in heaven forever. So no matter how much we suffer, we look forward to our time in heaven, where we will be free from sin and sorrow.

So no matter what happens in your life, whether is a good thing or bad thing, no matter how many things go differently than the way you wanted them to go, trust that God is in control and that everything will eventually be worked out into good. You may not always see the good but because God says so, you believe it to be true.

Your co-worker who said, “trust me, I’ve got this” about him we said, it all depends on what you know about the person, whether or not you are going to trust him. What do you know about God? We can say a lot, but what about this: he is a loving God who gave up his son to save us, he is all-knowing and all-powerful. He has kept all his promises and he promises to watch over you and make everything turn out for good.

God knows exactly what he is doing; he is in control of all things. Trust in him at all times and in every circumstance that no matter what happens it will end up good for those who love him. Amen.