

The Promise of Good

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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.

The promise of GOOD is inseparably linked to these three Characteristics of God.

God cannot be truly God and completely good if all of these things aren't completely true.

Vs. 28 - (Promise of Good) is Dependent upon these three truths about God.

I. God is Completely Sovereign

II. God is Infinite in Wisdom

III. God is Perfect in Love

It has been said by many authors over the years “God in His Love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and his His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.”

Before we unpack vs. 28 and the promise of Good we have to first understand who this promise is for. The text does not say that good is promised to all. It is a conditional promise and it is a particular promise in that we must define who the “those who love God” are.

See vs. 28 “for those who love God” - also keep reading “for those who are called”. So who are identified as “those who love God” and those “who are called”.

Paul explains in Vs. 29. For those He “Foreknew” mark that as a key word...

He also “Predestined” - two key words there. Foreknew and Predestined.

Understand this friend. Those in this passage that are said to Love God have defining characteristics. In order for us to rightly see the promise of vs. 28 we must first identify the characteristics of those to whom this promise will be bestowed.

Let's look at these together and then we will come back to unpack the Promise of Good that we see in Vs. 28.

7 Defining Characteristics of those who receive the promise of good:

1.) Those Who love God - This is an all encompassing love for God. (Not some platitude or catchphrase)

Deuteronomy 6:5–9 (ESV)

5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 10:12–13 (ESV)

12 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?”

2.) Those who are Called - Different greek words in this passage - Called / Invited Vs. 28 and Called / Summoned Vs.29

John 10:3–5 (ESV)

3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

3.) Those who God Foreknew - Progonisko - To know beforehand, to select in advance

John 17:6–9 (ESV)

6 “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

4.) Those who are Predestined - Proorizo - To decide ahead of time, to determine beforehand
Ephesians 1:5 (ESV)

5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Called, Foreknew, Predestined - All speak to a particular redemption that God had prepared before the foundation of the world. Not all are called, not all are foreknew, not all are predestined or there would be no one in hell. Because remember in John 17 Jesus said.

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.” Jesus came to redeem a particular people. Those whom God had set aside as called, those whom he foreknew and those whom he had predestined.

No I know the objection is going to be for someone of you that John 3:16 says.....

John 3:16 (ESV)

16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

We affirm that with every bit of conviction that we possess. We don't need to perform greek gymnastics to get away from the fact that John 3:16 says that God so loved the World. He did love the world and does love the world but all the world will not be saved from judgement. Keep reading.....

John 3:17–21 (ESV)

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

If God's goal and ultimate purpose was to save the entire world and that is the way you read John 3:16 then you have a God that has failed miserably. Listen church not one drop of our Saviors blood was spilled in vain. As Jesus said in John 17 He accomplished the work that the Father gave him to do and not one of those he came to save will perish.

So as we think of the scriptures saying that those who truly love God have been called, they have been foreknew and they are predestined let us not be troubled by those things. They should drive us to the most humble place we can possibly be.

Realizing that Christ has loved us inspite of us. As scripture teachers we were born dead in our trespasses and sins that we were spiritually dead and God in His mercy and grace before the foundations of the world chose us to be alive in Him. (Ephesians 2; Romans 3)

Some will object. What about man's free will? Man certainly has a free will. Let's look at it.

Romans 3:9–18 (ESV)

9 What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” 13 “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” 14 “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” 15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known.” 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Church here is the great encouragement. Salvation comes when God acts upon the heart to awaken it to the reality of its sinful condition and for eyes of faith to be granted upon that soul so that they can repent and turn from their sin and embrace the only means through which their sins can be forgiven.

There is no amount of self righteousness, works, money fame or fortune that can bring you to that place. It is God and God alone who gets the credit.

Let's keep going.....

5.) Those who are Conformed - Vs. 29 says that we are conformed to the image of His son. This is what we refer to as sanctification. The work in which God is working in accordance with our will to change us to be less like the world and more like Jesus. Sanctification is that purifying, refining work that rids us of our fleshly desires and matures us to be grown in faith.

6.) Those who are Justified - Those who are declared righteous before God.

Romans 3:23–26 (ESV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

7.) Those are Glorified - This is the final glory. This is where we are made completely Holy both positionally and personally. Right now we are positionally Holy because Christ is our substitute but eternally we will be glorified through Christ to God. This speak of our eternal security in Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 (ESV)

13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:10 (ESV)

10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Vs. 29-30

Justification, Sanctification, Glorification

Justification - Declared Righteous - Made RIGHT with God by God.

Sanctification - Being conformed to Christ's likeness - Made HOLY for our Good by God.

Glorification - 2 Thes 2:14, 2 Tim 2:10 - Made Glorious for God by God.

So wow! 7 Defining Characteristics of those who are receiving the Promise of Good. Why is this important.

If we don't understand what God has done through Christ to grant us our ultimate good eternally how can we have eyes to see the earthly good he is seeking to ordain for us temporarily?

You will never be able to see the Good that God is doing for you now if you don't believe and trust in the greatest Good that God has ever done. That is to save you from your sin and the punishment you deserve because of your sin and to present you blameless before God forever Glorified with him!

If you have not trusted Christ friend as the only one who can save you from you sin you will not have eyes to see how he is working all things for your good.

Let's hop back into vs. 28. Now we can look at this from the right perspective.

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

His purpose - Your Justification, Your Sanctification, Your Glorification (All for His GLORY)

We know! Where does this confidence come from?

Those who love God

All things work together for good. There it is, there is our Promise for those who love God.

Think about this for a fat minute if those 7 characteristics are true for all that you are in Christ and think about all of the different things that God has done to bring them to pass why wouldn't we believe him when he says that All Things work together for Good?

All things though? Really Pastor? My car accident, My lost job, My niece with stage 3 cancer, My baby that died and was a still born, My wife was diagnosed with an incurable disease, My husband who was caught in adultery, my child has cancer, an earthquake wipes out thousands, a hurricane kills 10's of thousands, a virus kills 100's of thousands.....All things?

What kind of God do we serve that would allow all of that and call it GOOD?

The only possible explanation I can find is to believe in a God who is in control of all of that to accomplish His purposes. Quite candidly if he can't or won't or isn't able to control all of that I don't want anything to do with him.

But what kind of God can work in and through all of that and say it is for our Good?

I'll tell you what kind of God - One that is completely Sovereign, Infinite in Wisdom and Perfect in Love. So the question becomes.....

Can you trust HIM Church to truly be about your good?

Jerry Bridges in His book Trusting God lays out for us these three truths about the Character of God.

He asks this question at the beginning of the book.

Can you trust GOD?

Can YOU trust God?

Did you catch the subtle difference in the question? Let me ask it in a different way. Can God be trusted? That is really the big question right. No it isn't. He has proven himself faithful. Time and Time again He has proven He'll do just what he says!

But we need to look at this together because practically we often live like we don't trust him. When we don't practically apply these truths we are basically saying....God I know better than you what is for my good and what isn't.

If we truly can trust him then we truly can see all things including tragedy and pain for our good.

I. God is Completely Sovereign

That is to say that God is in control of all things. The word that many theologians like to use is ordain. God ordains all things according to His purposes. Consider these verses.

Proverbs 16:9 (ESV)

9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

Proverbs 19:21 (ESV)

21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

Proverbs 21:30 (ESV)

30 No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord.

Ecclesiastes 7:13 (ESV)

13 Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?

James 4:15 (ESV)

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

Lamentations 3:37 (ESV)

37 Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it?

Job 42:2 (ESV)

2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Psalm 115:3 (ESV)

3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Isaiah 14:27 (ESV)

27 For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

Isaiah 43:13 (ESV)

13 Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"

Isaiah 46:10 (ESV)

10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

Daniel 4:35 (ESV)

35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Ephesians 1:11

Contrary to what you may read out there from a lot of popular "christian" authors God doesn't have his hands tied by your choices, he doesn't sit back and "take his hands off the wheel" he isn't a "cosmic fireman" taking a nap and only rushes to the scene of an accident when something goes wrong.

There are no "God moments" when God shows up on the scene when he otherwise appeared absent.

If you have had that view of God dear friend repent and cry out like the man that Mark rights about who desired his son to be healed and yet saw it as impossible and he Cried I believe Help my unbelief.

If you believe in a god like that it is not the God of the Bible that is the making of an idol of our own liking. One that we create so that we can get our mind around him. The God we serve, the God of the Bible, He is Sovereign over all things.

God is not like us! Our God He is in the heavens. Oh what great comfort comes in any circumstance when we know this.

There is no way you can see all of your circumstances for your good if you believe in that other god.

We could say much more about this but consider two examples from Scripture. Joseph was maligned in ways that are hard to grasp. Sold into slavery by his brothers and yet at the end of the story he says this in Genesis 45:8 “so then it was not you who sent me here, but God.”

What????? Joseph endured all that he went through because Joseph wasn't the hero of the story! God was. He raised up a savior in the most unlikely form in the most unlikely manner to keep his people from starving to death in the wilderness.

And what about Job. You know the story well. Consider what Job says.....at the end of all that he endured. Mind you all that he endured was from the Hand of God. Remember the story begins with God speaking to Satan Job 1:8....”have you considered my servant Job?” God says.....

Job 42:1–6 (ESV)

1 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 2 “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’ 5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Consider the story of Ruth, or Moses or David.....think of all the details over every aspect of creation that God ordained to bring about his purposes.

A.) God is Sovereign over People

1. God prompts the hearts of People - Exodus 3:21,22; Ezra 1:1

Exodus 3:21–22 (ESV)

21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

2. God restrains people - Genesis 20:6; Ex 34:23-24

Exodus 34:23–24 (ESV)

23 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. 24 For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.

B.) God is Sovereign over Nations

1. He rules over them all - 2 Chronicles 20:6

2. He appoints them and raises them up to do His will - Rom 13; 1 Timothy 2;1-2
3. He directs their hearts - Proverbs 21:1
4. He controls their hearts - Ezra 1:1
5. He directs their steps - Proverbs 16:9
6. He governs their power -
7. He presides over their rank and file - Daniel 4:17,32
8. He rules over their victories and defeats - Proverbs 21:3

We could go for days on this but I have to share this one...remember the story of Gideon in Judges 7? Gideon brings his army to the Lord and says he is ready to fight, some 30k plus men.....God says...no no. Too many men. I don't want everyone to think you won this battle. Those who are fearful, go home. 22k left and 10k remained. Still too many God says...Tell them to go get a drink, if they drink like a dog or bend down to drink from a knee send them home. 300 are left.

I would have loved to be there to see Gideon? Lord what in the wide world of sports is going on God? Gideon just be quite and get the marching band. Oh and get some empty clay pots while your are at it. And one last thing Gideon don't freak out when you see that the size of the army is a vast as the sand on the seashore.

God is sovereign over ever Nation and position of power on this earth!

C.) God is Sovereign over Nature

1. God controls the weather - Job 37: 3,6,10-13 (I'll just let you know ahead of time this one is gonna hurt a little) I realize I am saying this in western washington! But do you realize that when we complain about the weather we are in fact complaining against God.
Numbers 11:1
2. God ordains Natural Disasters - Isiah 45:7 Isaiah 45:7 (ESV) 7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things. This is so hard to process. 100's of thousands, millions have died since the dawn of creation. Whether mud slides in Peru or a Volcano in our own back yard. God is in control.
3. God ordains physical afflictions - Remember when Moses argued with God that he wasn't the right guy for the job because he had a speech impediment? Exodus 4:11 (ESV) 11 Then the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him

mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

4. God rules of Childlessness - This one hits really close to home for us! I know the family of 5 right? We couldn't have kids for over 4 years and it was through that process that God brought me to the pages of scripture through Jerry Bridges book Trusting God. Many places in scripture we see that God opens and closes the womb. He tells women who are barren they will give birth, tells women who are past their age of child bearing they will have children...etc. God even says in Psalm 139:13 that he "knits us together in the womb."

God is sovereign over all aspects of Nature. Even when we struggle to believe it or see it I pray that we would respond to God the way that Habakkuk did even in the midst of great suffering and famine.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (ESV)

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

That's my favorite verse to share at a wedding. NO JOKE.

II. God is Infinite in Wisdom

Romans 11:33 (ESV)

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Tragedy unfolds nearly every day around us. Some small some large. Some seemingly having explanation others we just simply don't have a category for. Even though we may find ourselves asking God why way more than we would like there is no question that He has proven to make beauty from Ashes.

Wisdom is to see knowledge applied to it's best possible end. The ability to determine the best course of action with all of the known information available. Our wisdom is fallible even when it is at it's absolute best but God's wisdom and that which can be known by him has no limit.

Psalm 147:5 (ESV)

5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

God's stated goal is to do all things for His own glory. This is everywhere in the scripture over 100 references in the New Testament alone about the Glory of God.

Remember the story of Lazarus? Jesus is made aware of Lazarus's illness and he decides to wait a few more days before coming. Lazarus lies dead in his tomb when Jesus arrives the body smells of death etc. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead but do you remember what Jesus said when first hearing of his illness.

John 11:4 (ESV)

4 But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

No matter what may come our way we can trust and know that the wisdom of God will never run out. He never is stumped by our circumstances. Rather our text this morning says that he is working all things together for our Good!

God’s wisdom is being displayed for His own Glory and our Good. What a comfort that should be for us even in the midst of our darkest moments.

Let us not forget what vs. 28 is pointing us to. Working all things for our good to those who are called according to God’s purpose. His purpose is for you to bring him Glory. So he is going to do as he sees fit to ordain all the affairs of our life to bring that to pass.

Despite what you may hear from TV preachers God wants you HOLY more than he wants you Happy.

That isn’t to say that there isn’t true and lasting joy and peace found in Christ. There most certainly is. There are pleasures for evermore at his right hand. There our countless blessings found in the promises of God.

Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

That is all amazing and wonderful and true but God wants his people Holy and in order to do that the refiners fire must burn away at all our sinful actions, attitudes and responses so that we can be more like Jesus.

Sometimes God allows things to happen from discipline and sometimes things happen just to conform us to the image of Christ. Either way our heart should respond with the realization that God is doing it for our Good.

Listen to this summary of Hebrews from Jerry Brides

“There is no agonizing by God, no hoping He has made the right decision, no wondering what is really best for us. God makes no mistakes. He knows infallibly with infinite wisdom what combination of good and bad circumstances will bring us more and more into sharing His holiness. He never puts too much of the “salt” of adversity into the recipe of our lives. His blending of adversity and blessing is always exactly right for us.”

(Maybe pray right here)

III. God is Perfect in Love

Romans 8:35 (ESV)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Romans 8:37 (ESV)

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

When we consider the magnitude of God's sovereignty and how His Wisdom is working in and through all things to accomplish His purposes and we can be tempted to look at tragedy and suffering in the world and think that God is not good.

Philip Hughes has said "that he cares not is just as unthinkable as that he can not."

God is LOVE - that is to say it is an essential attribute of His nature. Therefore He cannot act outside of Love.

We can't be tempted to think "How could God allow this to happen if He really loved me?"

To do so in that moment is really to say....God I know how to love better than you do. To question God's love and goodness is backhanded idolatry. It's basically saying God you aren't doing things the way you should and I know better than you do.

Now I realize that in the emergency room we aren't articulating that kind of theological declaration in the midst of our grief. Sometimes we are crying out in sheer desperation and asking God the honest question.

But here is the response we desire for all of our hearts.

Job 1:21 (ESV)

21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Shane and Shane write in a song that is so hard to listen to yet so abundantly wonderful at the same time....listen to this.

I come, God, I come
I return to the Lord
The one who's broken
The one who's torn me apart
You struck down to bind me up
You say You do it all in love
That I might know You in Your suffering
Though You slay me
Yet I will praise You
Though You take from me
I will bless Your name
Though You ruin me

Still I will worship
Sing a song to the one who's all I need
My heart and flesh may fail
The earth below give way
But with my eyes, with my eyes I'll see the Lord
Lifted high on that day
Behold, the Lamb that was slain
And I'll know every tear was worth it all
Though You slay me
Yet I will praise You
Though You take from me
I will bless Your name
Though You ruin me
Still I will worship
Sing a song to the one who's all I need
Though tonight I'm crying out
Let this cup pass from me now
You're still all that I need
You're enough for me
You're enough for me
Though You slay me
Yet I will praise You
Though You take from me
I will bless Your name
Though You ruin me
Still I will worship
Sing a song to the one who's all I need
Sing a song to the one who's all I need

Here is the thing. When we find ourself in the middle of the battle of seeing our tragedy and not believing that God is perfect in Love just think of the cross.

1 John 4:9–10 (ESV)

9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

And here is the beauty of this text. Remember the 7 attributes of Those who love God. God did this all for us before you even came into being. And when you were born dead in your trespasses in Sin God sent his only son on a rescue mission to die for you that you might live again.

I pray that when we read this text that we see a God who has miraculously saved us in spite of us and that the God we love and serve is Completely Sovereign, Infinite in Wisdom and Perfect in Love. And that he is working ALL things in our lives for our Good and for His own Glory!

In closing listen to this quote from Jerry Bridges regarding the Providence of God

"God's providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people."

Our Good / God's Glory - "God never pursues His glory at the expense of the good of His people, nor does He ever seek our good at the expense of His glory. He has designed His eternal purpose so that His glory and our good are inextricably bound together. What comfort and encouragement this should be to us. If we are going to learn to trust God in adversity, we must believe that just as certainly as God will allow nothing to subvert His glory, so He will allow nothing to sprint the good He is working out in us and for us."

Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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. 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.