

Don't Forget Verse 29 By Mallori Boston



About two years ago, I started the sanctifying and humbling process of biblical counseling training. As someone who professed Christ at an early age, the Gospel didn't mean much to me. I would have told you it was important, that Jesus died for me and that you should go to church, but it in no way impacted any part of my life. It wasn't till after high school that the profession of faith I made became saving faith; I was no longer who I used to be, but a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). So, when I began biblical counseling training, I would say I was a fairly new believer. And God taught me a lot and is sanctifying me as I work through the counseling certification process.

As my experience in the counseling room has only been about a year, I have come to see a pattern in counselees that was once a pattern of my own before a fellow counselor pointed this out to me. So many times, in counseling or just talking with Christians in everyday conversation, Romans 8:28 is a verse that has provided comfort in seasons of suffering and celebration. But I wonder if we have missed the real good news of what Paul is saying.

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

I have heard this verse repeated and clung to as people are going through hard or painful circumstances in life. It usually ends with “but I know God does everything for my good, so I know it’ll work out”. This is true. God does purpose all things (Genesis 50:20). The Bible is the only thing that can use absolutes in this way, and truly mean it. All things. But I wonder how often we think “all things” are really just the good things. The verse does say all things work together for good - so it must be just the “good” things, right? It brings about an important question then; what is the “good” that verse 28 is referring to? Well, by the grace of God, the answer is found right in the next verse.

“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.”

Paul gives us such hope in God’s sovereignty that He IS working **all** things for our good, but that good is defined in verse 29. The good is a believer being transformed into the image of His Son. I think the reason we tend to forget verse 29 is because it may not sound all warm and fuzzy. Without verse 29, that good could be getting everything I want or think I need or having an easy or comfortable life. We reassure ourselves when times are hard that God will make everything work out for good. But, is the good we are reassuring ourselves with - what we want or think we need - or the divine transformation and gift of looking more like Christ? It really is the greatest good we could ever receive. My hope is that we cling to verse 29. That as we remember that God will purpose ALL things - even the hard things - for the sake of making us look more like Christ, we rest assured knowing that this is the most loving and gracious gift one could give. And that through hard times, times of suffering, or times of struggling with sin more than we would like, we know God is working in us by His Spirit to hate sin more and more each day. This is a promise we can be assured He will complete in us. (Philippians 1:6)

Verse 29 is a beautiful reminder that the good the Lord has for us, is to conform us to the image of His Son. This verse is one of the most valuable lessons for me on God's sovereignty. Things will not go perfectly or easily. Life will not always be comfortable, (and we should probably expect more discomfort in a world that is broken than comfort.) And yet, verse 29 allows me to look at unfavorable circumstances with an unwavering belief that God is still good and is doing good in my life. The best good, in fact. Verse 29 does not remove the human emotion from the equation though. Although I have emotions, I cannot let them rule me, but I do not have to ignore them. I am called to cast them on my Savior whose strength never flags. Christ is sitting at the right hand of the throne, interceding for us to the Father. As he allows things into my life that are unfavorable, I can lament, cast my cares on him and take on His burden which is easy and light (Mathew 11:28-30) and find rest. I can take comfort that God graciously allows things he hates (His children suffering) for the purpose of something He loves (His children's sanctification). This promise is for those who love God, and are being transformed into Christ's image from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). Praise God for that.