

**August 17, 2014**  
**Pentecost 10**

*"Your Heavenly Father Has Good Plans for You"*

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## **ROMANS 8:28-30**

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*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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

"Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." So said Forrest Gump as he talked to different people who sat next to him at the bench at the bus stop. While it is true we do not know what our future holds, we know who holds the future. Even when we go through problems and troubles we can confidently say, "I know that my heavenly Father is going to bring some blessing out of all these troubles I am experiencing."

I am holding in my hand a needlepoint of Jesus carrying a lamb on his shoulders. The backside of this is a jumble of knots. When we face difficult times everything seems like a jumble of knots to us from the bottom looking up. But our loving heavenly Father is always looking down at how he is going to work out good from the problems we are experiencing. He sees the big picture we cannot see.

By way of comparison, think back to a time when you went camping with your family. Your mom and dad put a lot of work into packing up things for camping, making sure you had enough clothes to wear and food to eat. The parents did the planning and the children enjoyed what their parents carefully planned for them. You are a dear child of your heavenly Father through Jesus, and he is carefully planning out your life. He has good plans for you. He always has good plans for you.

### **Look at how he plans your future**

"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." We know. It does not say, "we think" or "we feel" or "we suppose." Not it says, "we know." There is an air of certainty about this statement, not an air of uncertainty or doubt.

The Greek word used here for knowing is a word that has the thought of knowing something from personal experience. For example I can say I know there is a good clam chowder restaurant in Pismo Beach called Splash Cafe because my friend told me how good it was. That is quite different from saying "I know this restaurant has good clam chowder because I have actually eaten the clam chowder myself." I know it is not good for me because of all the cream that is used, but it sure tastes good.

We can speak from personal experience that our loving heavenly Father will work out

everything for our good because we know how much he loves us through Jesus, and we know firsthand from his Word that this is definitely true. It is not something based on wishful thinking or pie in the sky optimism. It is based on the concrete reality of God's Word and the concrete reality of the love that has been shown to us in the gift of his Son.

Notice it says that in all things our God works out everything for our good. Really? All things? Everything for our good? There are good things that happen to us and bad things that happen to us. When good things come to us our God will work through those good things to bring us closer to his love for us. He will even break us down when we become boastful and proud because we have been blessed more than others.

Our heavenly Father also works through the bad things we experience to draw us closer to him and lead us to appreciate just how long and wide and high and deep his love is for us. A father told the story of how he lost his son on Christmas Eve to sudden infant death syndrome. He checked on his son before he went to sleep at night and noticed he had stopped breathing. Later he would tell how God was able to bring some good out of that loss when he gained a deeper appreciation of how God so loved the world that he was willing to give up his Son for us.

Some years ago, there was book by a Jewish rabbi that tried to answer the question of why bad things happen to good people. The name of the book was "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." He wrote from his personal experience of losing his son to a strange aging disease. He wrote about the good that he saw coming out of that experience as the community of people gather around him to support him and his family. What the Jewish rabbi did not discuss in his book was this great truth that our God works out everything for our good when tragedies come to us. Having friends around when trouble comes is sure a blessing. It is an even greater blessing to know with 100% that our heavenly Father will work out everything for our good and for his glory.

The Lord is even able to bring blessings from the troubles we may experience from the hands of other people. Remember the account of Joseph in the book of Genesis. Joseph was favored by his father over the other brothers. That made them extremely jealous and angry especially as Joseph paraded around in the beautiful coat of many colors and also shared with them dreams that implied his brothers would someday bow down to him. They wanted to kill him, but then opted to sell him into slavery in the land of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph in the land of Egypt turning problems into blessings. It was Joseph who saved the land of Egypt by storing up grain. Eventually when his brothers come to Egypt to buy food, Joseph was able to forgive them. In fact Joseph even said these well known words to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is being done, the saving of many lives."

When Paul and Silas preached the gospel to the people of Philippi they were badly beaten and thrown into the inner dungeon. The Lord was with them in that dark inner dungeon. The Lord give them the strength to sing hymns at midnight. The Lord gave them the opportunity to lead the jailor and his family to know about Jesus and be baptized. The loss of a job leads to a new job and a new friendship and a new opportunity to bear witness to your faith. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

## **Look at how he has planned your past**

If you want evidence that God will carefully plan your future for his glory and your good, then look at what he planned for you and carried out for you in the past. Paul writes, "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." Notice the past tense. God foreknew you in the past and predestined you in the past to be conformed to the image of his Son.

God foreknowing us is so much more than just knowing something about us. It means that God chose us in Christ not based on anything he saw in us but purely by his grace and mercy. Surely, I cannot find anything in myself that would make God want to know me personally and love me. Have you ever been with a group of kids that pick teams for a game of football or baseball? It seems that some of the kids were always picked last and some were always picked first. There is nothing in me that would ever move God to want me on his team, or have me as his child or have me be conformed to the image of his Son. As we sing in one of our hymns, "Foul and full of sin I am, I am all unrighteousness."

It is purely by grace that our God foreknew that he would choose you and me to be on his team. In one of our hymns we sing, "Lord, 'tis not that I did choose you; That I know could never be, For this heart would still refuse you, Had your grace not chosen me." Ephesians 1 says, "God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

God predestined you to be conformed to the image of his Son. The word for predestined has the thought of putting a boundary around someone, or staking a claim. Our God carefully staked out the details of his creation. He carefully staked out what Jesus would do to save us and he carefully staked out and executed the faith you now have in Christ. He chose you to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. Think of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. He lived the perfect life you could not live. He died the perfect death to pay for your sin. He raised himself from the dead. Now you are attached to Christ through faith. You take on the image of holiness and perfection of the Son of God that was lost through sin. Jesus is the firstborn and you are his brothers and sisters. I like what one commentary said on these words. "God's will for His beloved Son is that the Son be glorified by having many brothers, redeemed and glorious brothers, at His side."

If there is any doubt that your God will work out everything for your good in your future then listen more to what he has done for you in the past. "And those he predestined he called; those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified." You were called by God's grace. We think of how Jesus called his disciples to come and follow him. His call created faith and led them to follow Jesus. Look at your past life. Think of all the times the voice of Jesus has called you and brought you close to his love for you.

Those he called he also justified. Your God has put you in a position where he justifies you. That means you are declared not guilty through Jesus. Romans 5 says, "Therefore being justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Those he justified he also glorified. Yes, from all eternity the Lord your God has planned

the glory he has prepared for you. The night before he died Jesus prayed, "O Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." The glory is already ours in Christ.

You see dear Christian how carefully your heavenly Father has planned out your life to bring you to this point where you can say, "I have been called, I have been justified, I have been glorified." How can our God who has done so much for us in the past by his grace, not also work out everything for our good in the future? That is the great hope we have as Christians as we wait for Jesus to come and take us to the place he has prepared for us. Amen.