

# All things work together for good (Romans 8:28-39)



## A. Hope amid Growing Darkness

1. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reports there is a 30% increase in drug overdose in the USA over the 12 months ending in April 2021 – i.e., 100,000+ drug overdose death.
2. OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) also reports there is a sharp increase in depression among adults from the pre-pandemic times to the present times in 2021. E.g., Sweden: 11%->30%, Mexico: 3%->28%, Australia: 10%->28%, the USA: 7%->25%, South Korea: ~37% (no available data point for the pre-pandemic era).
3. Dr Kam's data last week estimates that 4 out of 5 adults in Australia are suffering from some form of depression. Many people feel we are living through some of the most hopeless days. But God has given us the everlasting hope - the blessed hope, the culmination of all hopes (Titus 2:11-13), the living hope - which goes beyond the grave (1 Peter 1:3).

Jesus is coming back, and He will set up His kingdom here on earth. He will punish every evil and reward all that is good. It is darkest just before dawn, and God has appointed us to be salt and light. God's people can maintain bright hope because it is founded on:-

- (i) God's throne is permanent and His truth is indestructible. History has already been written ahead of time, and God is seeking partnership with the church that prays.
- (ii) God's abiding presence & the hope of glory.
- (iii) God's biased love toward us who love Him.

## B. God's Grace-Editing

*'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.'* (Rom 8:28)

1. Do you know that God makes all things work together for good for those who love Him? This promise includes the seeming disasters in our lives and the painful experiences we have gone through. It even includes our greatest failures. This is one of the greatest promises in the entire Bible. Who among us has not made any mistakes? Who among us has no regrets in life?

*'When God planned our destiny, He factored in our stupidity.'* People who love God and are zealous tend to make more mistakes than others, e.g., Peter. How can God do this for us when we are so full of inconsistencies? God is sovereign, and He is in complete control of this world and the outcome of our lives. Yes, we make choices, good and bad. There are consequences for our choices. But God has the last say on the *outcome of our life depending on how we respond to Him.*

2. God has the *final editorial stroke on your life's resume* and that is what matters in the end. E.g., *'Enoch walked with God.'* *'David, a man after God's own heart.'* This is how God summarised David's life after David made a mess of his life. *This is how God's bias of love works toward us.* This grace of God for us is the cause for great hope and confidence. He promises to make all things work together for good, not only for David but also for us, provided that we meet two conditions: (i) We love God; (ii) We walk in His calling.

If we do not love God, or reject God's purpose and run away from His calling, then this promise of God does not work. But if we meet these two pre-conditions, then we can expect God to turn everything in our lives into 'good.' And God's standard of 'good' is so much better than ours!

## C. Do I Love God?

1. Do I love God? This is the most important question we can ask ourselves. The basis of our love for God is God's love for us. *'If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will He not with Him also freely give us all things?'* (8:31-32 c.f. Ps 84:10-11). How does Satan drive a wedge between us and God? Satan's primary weapon is guilt and shame. He whispers, 'You

*have failed God and it is too late.* But the Scripture says Satan does not get to have the last word on your life. Christ Jesus does.

What does Jesus Christ say of you? Christ has died for you, He will not disown you. Christ has made you righteous, He will not condemn you. Christ intercedes for you at the right hand of God, He will not accuse you. (Rom 8:33-34) Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith will not fail. (C.f. Luke 21:31-32) Jesus is praying for you in heaven that your faith in the love of God will not fail.

## 2. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' (Rom 8:35)

Paul listed seven real and immediate physical threats before him: (i) tribulation, (ii) distress (Gk. 'stenochória' - internal anguish from being restricted to narrow-confined space), (iii) persecution ('diógmōs' - targeted attack of Christians, hunting down an animal), (iv) famine, (v) nakedness, (vi) peril (danger of the unknown), (vii) sword.

Paul then reaches to the unseen cosmic threat: (i) death & life, (ii) angels, principalities, powers, (iii) things present and things to come, (iv) height and depth, (v) nor any other created thing, i.e., everything in the whole universe, except God who alone is uncreated.

It means then absolutely nothing *shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.* (8:39) If you love God and walk in His calling, then the power of God's love within you and upon you will transform absolutely everything in your life into the highest good. This we can count on. *'Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.'* (Rom 8:37). We will come out of the battle with more than what we went in with if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

## D. Do I Walk in God's Purpose?

1. The purpose of God becomes unwrapped in our lives through God's call. The call of God is not something we plan for ourselves. It is something God has planned long before we were born, i.e., predestined (pre-planned). That plan of God is tailor-made for you, and it gets worked out when you accept God's call to salvation in Christ Jesus. What does this call of God lead us to? Ultimately to 'our glorification in Christ' (Rom 8:30).

Paul lists the steps here: (i) God's foreknowledge (Rom 8:28, 1 Pet 1:2); (ii) God's Choice (Eph 1:4, 1 Pet 1:2); (iii) Predestination (Rom 8:28-30, Eph 1:5, 11, 2:10); (iv) Call (Rom 8:28, 30; 11:29, 2 Thess 2:14); (v) Salvation (2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:5); (vi) Justification (Rom 3:20; 8:30; 1 Cor 6:11); (vii) Glorification (Rom 8:30, 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph 2:4-6; Heb 2:10).

2. If we love God and walk in His purpose, nothing that happens in our lives can cause us to fail or despair, because God is continually at work in our lives to redeem, purify, beautify our lives, and bring out His best from every disappointment and set-back. This leads to our glorification. No matter what, God will ALWAYS bring out 'good' even from the worst days of our lives, if we stay on track of God's calling on our lives.

The safest place for us in the last days is in God's will and purpose. There will be no other safety net. The call of God is rarely spectacular. But *you* have a vital and irreplaceable calling in God. If we totally commit our lives to God and to do His will, then we are just as unstoppable as the will of God. The glory and the power of God are linked to the hope of His calling on your life.

*'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...' (Eph 1:17-19).*

3. Jesus said, *'You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.'* (Matt 5:14) Australia needs this light more than ever before. Light always repels darkness and reveals the truth. The Church is God's lampstand on earth. We need the lampstands to burn ever more brightly (Rev 1:20). Each church must have her lampstand burning. We must take our spiritual position in the heavenly place with Jesus (Eph 2:6). Will the Church of Australia tend to the lampstand to burn before God? The best days of the Church are yet ahead of us. This is not the time to withdraw and cower in fear, but time to seek God and boldly pray for the release of His glory in the church and the harvest of the earth.

## E. Three Groanings of Hope (Rom 8:18-25)

Jesus said in Matt 24:8 that the end of this age will come like birth pain, 'These are the beginning of sorrows.'

1. Paul says in Romans 8:22 that the whole creation is groaning. It is the groan of earnest expectation and hope for the coming of the new age, when the creation itself will be set free from the corruption and sin brought into this world by the man's fall. The whole creation has been groaning from the day of Adam's fall till now for the revealing of the sons of God. And we who belong to Christ are the fruit fruits of the new creation (Rom 8:22).
2. Paul says we who are in Christ and have this hope, also groan inwardly while eagerly waiting for the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23-25). This groaning is an expression of the eager anticipation in hope. Do you have this groaning in your spirit?
3. Not only does the creation and the believers in Christ groan, but the Holy Spirit within us also groans. His groan is intercession for us, that cannot be uttered in words (Rom 8:26-27).

These groans are a form of intercession born out of the hope for the kingdom of God to be birthed in this world. Having this groan within you is the proof of the hope within you for the coming kingdom of God. This hope fuels the intercession of the saints in the book of revelation which brings Jesus back to the earth.