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A Needed Reminder

Romans 8:29, 29

Is it a promise as we try to make it out to be?

Opening comment: We recognize that overall, all things, both evil and good, must work for the glory of God, the expansion of His kingdom, and for the well-being of His church, for God works all history to accomplish His good pleasure. *All things for good* in judgment against the ungodly, *all things for good* against the sinner in calling him to Christ, *all things for good* in revealing the hidden things of dishonesty, &c.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Romans 8:28, which cannot be separated from v. 29, is probably one of the best-known, and maybe one of the most abused scripture as it is claimed by Christians and non-Christians alike to meet personal emotional needs. It is commonly wrested from its context which is required to get its proper understanding. **The context of v. 28 is chapter 8** as well as all Scripture. **V. 17** *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. V. 22, groaning as we wait for our redemption.* (2 Tim 2:12, Heb 13:3, 1 Pet 2:20. 1 Thes 3:4 promises tribulation–trouble, affliction, distress. Ro 5:3,12:12, 2Co 4:17, Php 4:14)

Observe, vv. 28, 29:

1) *all things;*

2) *the called...* **Individuals** are *foreknown*, they are *predestinated* in the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. There are more supporting passages on God's specific call, *he did foreknow*, &c., to specific individuals than we can go into, e.g., **Acts 2:23, Eph 1:4, 11, Col 1: 15-18.**

3) *according to his purpose...*

4) *his purpose* is spelled out in v. 29, *to be conformed to the image of his Son...*

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Ephesians 1:4 (1 Pet 1:12)

5) *And we know...*

The comfort found in v. 28 is for those who are seeking *first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*; it is their assurance that all their distressing circumstances are working to form them *into the image of his Son*, which is their goal. They are being assured that all things are working for His glory and for the good of the Elect. Because of that knowledge, they are able, by faith, to **rejoice no matter what the circumstances**, for they understand that God's will is being accomplished as He works to form *the image of his Son* in them.

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. (Philip 4:4)

But what is the context of v. 28 which is easy to overlook? **The context of v. 28 is chapter 8**, as well as all Scripture, is suffering for Christ. **V. 17** *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* **18** *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* **V. 22, groaning as we wait for our redemption.** (2 Tim 2:12, Heb 13:3, 1 Pet 2:20. 1 Thes 3:4 promises tribulation—trouble, affliction, distress. Ro 5:3,12:12, 2 Co 4:17, Php 4:14)

The context after v. 28 continues: **V. 36, killed all the day long**, and concludes with v. 39 and the impossibility of being separated *from the love of God*. Despite the distressing circumstances of chapter 8, it closes with this assurance, v. 37, **Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. (Acts 5:41)

V. 28, afflictions and tribulations should produce joy in those who are the called according to His purpose, **Rejoice evermore.** (Rom 12:12, 1 Thes 5:16, 2 Cor 8:2, 1 Pe 4:13, 14, &c.) Accordingly, there is no promised comfort in v. 28 for those who are not seeking His kingdom and righteousness first of all, and who are not desiring that *the image of his Son* be formed in them. Those who are only seeking personal peace and comfort in their distress have no promise to claim here. Moreover, those who cannot honestly rejoice in v. 28 need to examine themselves to see if they are in the faith.

Romans 8 is an assurance for those desiring to be formed into the image of the Son. In the process of their sanctification to be like His Son, they face many kinds of distressing situation. They understand that the purpose of **all things** of v. 28 is to perform the spiritual work in the people of God. That is, all things are working together to conform His people to the image of His Son. How many of those who claim v. 28 are desiring to be **conformed to the image of his Son?**

Thus, the logical implication is that if one's goal is NOT TO be more like **his Son**, claiming v. 28 though it may be comforting, it is an empty claim. Being formed into the Son's image involves suffering even as He suffered, which the natural man does not want to read into v. 28.