

All Things Considered Romans 8:26-39

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A very superstitious bus driver was constantly trying to avoid anything that was supposed to bring bad luck, and he tried everything to get good luck. His pockets were full of good luck charms, and he kept a sharp look-out for any signs of bad luck.

Once as he was driving a bus load of people down the highway, a black cat ran across the road in front of the bus. He couldn't swerve or turn; he had to do something quick to avoid bad luck. So he turned around in his seat and yelled to everyone on the bus: "Quick. Spit over your left shoulder, NOW!" Then he spit over his own left shoulder.

But in turning around to yell, he lost control of the bus, which went airborne several hundred yards, rolled in the air, & finally came to rest in a ditch.

The driver crawled out, and helped all of his passengers out. Then he yelled at them again: "O.K. now, who was it who didn't spit?!"

Not, "Praise God no one was hurt." Not "My mistake, I'm sorry." Not, "Please forgive my carelessness." Not even, "I knew it." He wanted to blame someone. And actually, in a way that's kind of what's behind a belief in luck or superstition. It means I don't have to be responsible.

All things considered, it comes down to world view: the paradigms & habits of thinking that add up to how we look at the world.

In High School, I had a good friend named Cheryl. She was a very good person, always cheerful and positive, confident in the goodness of life, and active in her church. I ran across her again while I was in college, but her outlook had changed. Life is hard, she said, and she was afraid. Then in Seminary I got a letter from her listing several calamities in her life. She was panhandling, and her friends were. I think she might have mentioned drugs. She was depressed.

I wrote back that I had faith in the words of Paul: All things work together for good. Surely something good would come from her troubles. She wrote back that she didn't believe that. Last I ever heard from Cheryl.

A little later at the Seminary bookstore, I ran into a missionary I knew, Herman Mansur. I told him about this exchange. He pointed out my mistake: I forgot the last part of the verse:

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

And I hadn't noticed that Cheryl had lost her positive world view, the paradigm that says God is in control of my life & the world, & its destiny.

She wasn't in tune with God's Holy Spirit, as we discussed last Sunday, earlier in Romans 8.

Some very faithful people believe that everything that happens is predetermined, that people have no choices in life. They may call it predestination, but that's not right. Predestination is not predeterminism. Predestination is the idea that our all-knowing God guides the faithful in salvation.

In a sense, because God loves the world, the world is saved, predestined to salvation. But we do have free will, and can make choices. We make better choices if we have the paradigm of Romans 8.

[While we have a choice, we also have a destiny, a God-given destiny. "God given destiny" is not as fixed as predetermination. There is a bigger purpose to your life than you think there is.

God uses your life in ways that you have no idea about, in ways that are beyond your knowing. That is what the doctrine of predestination is all about. Your life is much bigger than you understand.] Edward F. Markquardt, Sermons from Seattle

Martin Luther said the Letter to the Romans was the most important piece in the NT. And on this chapter, he said, “Faith is a living, unshakeable confidence in God's grace; it is so certain, that someone would die a thousand times for it. This kind of trust in and knowledge of God's grace makes a person joyful, confident, and happy with regard to God and all creatures. This is what the Holy Spirit does by faith. Through faith, a person will do good to everyone without coercion, willingly and happily; he will serve everyone, suffer everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. It is as impossible to separate works from faith as burning and shining from fire. Therefore be on guard against your own false ideas and against the chatters who think they are clever enough to make judgments about faith and good works but who are in reality the biggest fools. Ask God to work faith in you; otherwise you will remain eternally without faith, no matter what you try to do or fabricate. MARTIN LUTHER, Commentary on Romans

All things considered, it comes down to world view: the paradigms and habits of thinking that add up to how we look at the world.

You know God's love for the world. He gave his only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. And that required of him that he be born as we are born, struggle as we must struggle, suffer as we must suffer, and die as we must die. And his death was of a horrible, tortured kind at the hand of cruel people. That was a bad thing. But what came of it was that he rose again to new life, that we might have new life. That was a good thing.

When there are pandemics, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, fires, drought, sickness, losses, high prices, even hangnails and flat tires, don't let them get you out of tune, or shift your paradigm from what you know in faith when all things are considered. Stay tuned. Know, live, believe Romans 8:28: ²⁸We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

LORD keep us saying no to everything that makes it more difficult to say yes to you.