Dear Open Door Family,

Many years ago Carol and I knew a young woman who was raised in a Christian family and accepted Jesus as Savior at a young age. However, as a professional pursuing a career she ran into a number of obstacles and hardships which cause her a lot of heartache. She prayed and sought God but when nothing "changed" she walked away from church - and to this day is only marginally following God. Why did this happen? She grew up being told that when you have troubles and problems you go to God and He will fix them. Not only that, if you do what God says you will be blessed and be successful in your life. If you have struggles they can be handled quickly and easily by asking God to take care it all. The problem with coming to God in that way is that it is very demanding. It also makes us the ones who decide what we need and want. For many people who were raised like this, if God does not come through in the way that we want Him to then they feel betrayed or angry and many of them drift away from God. Let's look at these verses together.

Romans 8:31-32 (NIV) What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Romans 8:28 (NIV) 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.

I love verses 31-32 which encourage me and remind me that God is on my side. It reminds me that nobody can fight against me successfully because they would be fighting God who is on MY SIDE. It also reminds me that GOD gave His Son - Jesus died for me. If God was willing to do that then He must be willing to give me so much more. Isn't that what the ALL THINGS means? Verse 28 uses that same word ALL THINGS but in a little different way. Here the implication is that even in BAD things God is working for our good. This is harder for us and we are not as interested in ALL THINGS working out for good if it means we have to struggle, or go through really difficult things. It is so much easier to move on to vs. 32 and dwell on God graciously giving us ALL THINGS. It is important to remember God blesses us in MANY different ways. Part of His blessing, part of the good things He graciously gives us may be hardship and difficulty which has the potential to draw us into a more intimate relationship with Him - if we will embrace the hard things as coming from Him for a good purpose. John Piper comments: "God takes ALL THINGS and makes them serve our ultimate good. It does not mean we get everything our imperfect hearts demand. It does mean that we get what is good for us." (God is the Gospel Pg. 124) The ESV Study Bible: "God weaves everything together for good for his children. The 'good' in this context does not refer to earthly comfort but conformity to Christ, closer fellowship with God, bearing good fruit for the kingdom, and final glorification."

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank You that You are Sovereign and in control of all things. Thank you that even the hard and difficult things in my life can be used by You for my good and Your glory. Please Lord, help me to embrace Your work in my life, draw me closer to you, help me to see Your goodness and grace in all that happens.

Pastor Mark Kieft
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