



The beginning of a new year always brings hope of better things to come. Yet, we are quickly reminded of the sinful world around us as things continue to go wrong. All of us experience this in our daily lives as disappointments pop up, difficulties continue into the new year and past experiences teach life is indeed difficult. The promise of a new year does not always work out. Paul writes in **Romans 8:28** **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.”** Life’s difficulties cloud our reception of Paul’s words. But the sacred writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit, speaks with great purpose. God loves His people and the most difficult of circumstances can be used by God for our spiritual good. Even the worst of times can strengthen faith, draw believers closer to God and call our attention to God’s Divine Grace in Christ for us.

Just having celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we think of the circumstance the young Virgin Mary finds herself in. She was a young mother who had not known a man, in the Biblical meaning of the word, certainly a scandalous situation. Yet, God works out her situation for her good, for the good of the world, for salvation is found in her Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ and no one else (**Acts 4:12**). Joseph is sold into slavery but God uses his situation as he finds favor in Egypt to be in a position of authority at the right time when his father’s family would need help (**Genesis chapters 42-46**). These and many other examples in Scripture demonstrate how God works things out for good for those who love Him. While we cannot see what lies ahead, God has His Divine plan in place. **“But God shows His love for us in this that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:8b.** God’s love was given in His grace through Christ even when we were in the worst of circumstances, that is, without hope since we are unable to make ourselves acceptable to God. Jesus is not spared but given for us that we would have forgiveness through His life, death, and resurrection.

At times, we might feel like we are alone or that God has forgotten about us. Nothing could be further from the truth. God loves us in Christ and works all things, even the very worst of things that happen to us, out for our good, for our salvation in Christ. There is no promise of a perfect life on earth because we live in an imperfect world, affected by sin. Nothing we experience, nothing we do will be perfect in this life. Yet, God’s love in Christ gives us the perfect Savior, the perfect human being, the God/Man Jesus that we are made God’s own.

When life seems most difficult, God continues to work all things out for our good as we are called according to His purpose. God’s Divine purpose is not complicated nor a secret. God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, **1 Timothy 2:4**. Jesus is sent by God for all people (**St. John 3:16**), to seek and save the lost (**St. Luke 19:10**) because salvation is offered as a free gift by God’s grace through the power of the Gospel (**Romans 1:16-17**) as God gives the gift of faith and faith trusts in Christ as Savior (**Ephesians 2:8-9**).

To say we do not know what 2022 will bring for us sounds like the same thing we say every new year. Of course, it is true that we do not know what is in store for any of us in 2022. However, one thing we do know is that God’s love for us in Christ will never be taken from us as Paul teaches in the closing verses of **Romans chapter 8**. **“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 8:38-39.**

The victory Christ wins over sin, death and the devil is ours through the grace and mercy of God. The victory of Christ assures that nothing will separate us from God’s love for us in Christ our Savior. Christ has given His all, His precious blood, and His life that by His death and resurrection, we would never receive what we deserve for our sin, but instead forgiveness, life, and salvation through Him. The year 2022 is as foreign to us as 2021 was to us a year ago as well. Even though we cannot predict the events of 2022, we know full well, God loves us in Christ and that He continues to work all things out for our good as we love Him because He first loved us. As we enter another New Year by Divine grace, the hymn writer reminds us that God has always been our help and will be for all time to come through His great love for us in Christ our Savior!

**Our God, our Help in ages past, Our hope for years to come.
Our Shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal Home!**

TLH 123 “Our God, Our Help In Ages Past”

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt