

All Things for Good Romans 8:28

Intro

A recent project that Author and blogger Stephen Altrogge undertook on social media was gathering Bible verses that are not typically used for inspirational purposes and to make memes out of them for the enjoyment of all. I did enjoy and I bring you some examples this morning

Beautiful picture of tasty loaves of bread with Ez. verse superimposed **And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung.” (Ezekiel 4:12)**

Silhouette of a woman arms outstretched in joy before a beautiful sunset **“The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do... (Deuteronomy 28:20)**

Picture of a cute baby goat **You shall not boil a young goat in its mothers’ milk (Exodus 23:19)** “How did you know this is what I needed right now”

Slap one of these little numbers on your coffee mug to encourage and inspire you each morning.

We revere God’s Word - all of Scripture is the inspired Word of God and is profitable including the verse I read. Not mocking the Scripture just poking some fun at the common practice of taking certain verses as inspirational quotes

The truth is that there are some verses and chapters that God has seen fit to use in more remarkable ways in the lives of his people and in his church

Romans 8 is one of those chapters that God has used and continues to use in remarkable ways in the lives of his people

Romans 8:28 - our verse this morning is one of those remarkable verses. Well-known, often declared, precious treasure of a promise.

It is indeed a Mt. Everest of a promise with the power to completely change our perspective about everything in life

Remarkable promise with life-changing implications

Let’s examine this remarkable promise so that we can live under it and in the good this promise

God intends that this promise would build our awareness of his love, strengthen our faith in his greatness and goodness, and speak grace and life into the confusion, weakness, and suffering of this life.

Two Points

1. The Promise
2. The Requirement to Receive this Promise

I. The Promise

- A. God, through the Apostle Paul, has been teaching us about the realities of what it means to suffer and experience weakness as a Christian in this world
1. We suffer like all people do but v. 18 there is glory that is coming that makes our very real suffering nothing in comparison - when Christ comes again and death and pain and suffering and tears are swallowed up by life and victory and freedom and joy
 2. There are wonderful joys in this life but there is much suffering - we groan - there are sighs that only suffering know.
 3. The groaning we experience because of suffering and weakness is heard by God and in fact God, v. 26-27 the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, groans in prayer on our behalf as we experience the weaknesses of this life. God within us prays to God above us and these prayers are effectual and fruitful for our care and help because when God prays to God that is an effective prayer! The Spirit helps us in our weakness by interceding on our behalf before God
- B. V. 28 now behold, a promise to for the Christian, directs our attention to what God is doing in our lives by his grace through his Spirit - we remember that this verse arrives in the context of suffering and weakness
- C. In this life of weakness and suffering, helped by the indwelling Spirit, hope fixed on the relief and life that Jesus is bringing - God is not only helping you through your circumstances - he is working through each and every circumstance for your good.
1. "We know" - in contrast with v. 26 where we do not know how to pray in our weakness - this we know - we know this unshakable, bedrock reality is at work "all things work together for good" - break it down
 2. "ALL THINGS work together for good" a somewhat startling revelation - all things? I mean we can easily understand when happy things happen that God has blessed us and been good to us but ALL THINGS?

Illustration: Upgrade to business class

- a) The raise or the promotion at work
- b) Settling on a new home
- c) A child is born
 - (1) Don't have to think long and hard to figure out if God has been good to us
3. ALL THINGS
 - a) the downsize / layoff
 - b) the cancer
 - c) the miscarriage
 - d) The abuse and neglect
 - e) even our own stupid sins - ALL THINGS means ALL THINGS work together for good
 - (1) In EVERY situation and circumstance and experience - happy or devastating and everything in between
4. All things WORK TOGETHER for good
 - a) How do all of the seasons and circumstances and experiences of our lives work together? Experiences and circumstances aren't sentient, thinking things that can strategize how to get this done

- b) All things work together for good because there is a worker behind all these things — God himself
 - (1) Presupposes something massively important about God - he has the might, ability, power to accomplish this promise - for him to accomplish this promise he must be all-powerful and in control of all things! Not assuming you are there - everyone tracking with me

Illustration: video clip from a large church in the Midwest “the doctrine that God is in control of everything is the dumbest doctrine I have ever heard” his reasoning being how can God be good and in control when there are things like childhood leukemia, rape and violence. God in control of that? I’m not here to say this is all easy to understand. I am saying that you either have the God of the Bible who mysteriously and sovereignly is in control of all things or you have a God of your preferences - a God who is unable or unwilling to rule his creation and is at the mercy of random circumstances.

- (2) What will you have instead? A God who is unable, unwilling, hands tied? God’s Word is clear

all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35)

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. (1 Chronicles 29:11)

- (3) Most precious to us is the revelation that The Cross - the death of Christ as our substitute to bear the wrath of God in our place condemned that we would be justified and forgiven of our sins. Behind that cross is our God in control of all things - working his will

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23)

- (a) Oh, how grateful we are that he is in control - for our very salvation was accomplished according to the realization of the working of his sovereign will.
- (4) He reigns over all things - yes sin and Satan and evil is in the world - but he reigns without being guilty of that sin or evil - that charge can never be laid on him
- c) Not aloof and distant - He wield his sovereign might down to the minutest detail of our lives to cause even our suffering, even our sin, even our enemies to WORK together for our good
 - (1) He is transcendent in his might and wisdom and sovereign rule
 - (2) He is immanent - near to us working in every detail
- 5. All things work together FOR GOOD
 - a) Not just working things according to his will for his glory - for our good
 - b) That means that his will, his desire for us is that we would experience the goodness of God - so much so that ALL THINGS MUST WORK TO THAT END - OUR GOOD
 - c) Does not mean that we should act like the sadness and horrors of this life are good - rather he is working them for our good

- d) God's idea of good - not necessarily always ours
 - (1) Prosperity
 - (2) A peaceful life, safety and stability
 - (3) Lifetime supply of Five Guys burgers
 - (a) Oh, we all have our versions of the good life
 - (4) God in his divine wisdom knows what is our ultimate and greater good - v. 29 and 30 after Easter
 - (a) Conformed to the image of his Son - working all things toward making us more godly, more holy, more durable in faith, more compassionate and kind and sacrificial
 - (b) Fitting us to persevere through this life and into our glorious future
 - (c) All things needed to preserve and sustain us - He knows what we need far more than we do

Illustration: Prosperity can be a temptation and a test - forget God and live with the illusion that we are good without him. Affliction can wake one up to our deep, abiding need for God's grace

Afflictions work for good, as they are the means of loosening our hearts from the world. When you dig away the earth from the root of a tree, it is to loosen the tree from the earth; so God digs away our earthly comforts to loosen our hearts from the earth. (Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good*, p. 29)

- e) It is incomplete to say something like this "you just need to trust in God's sovereignty"

Illustration: RC Sproul in a plane

- f) It is true but incomplete we must know - God wants us to know and trust in his sovereign GOODNESS toward us
- g) Joseph certainly experienced this
 - (1) Sold into slavery
 - (2) Falsely accused of attempted rape and imprisoned
 - (3) In the end raised to vice president of Egypt and was the instrument in God's hand to feed his people in a time of famine.

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:20)

- D. There is encouragement in this world that sound a little bit like this promise - connected but anemic
 - 1. It will all work out in the end
 - 2. Everything happens for a reason
 - 3. What goes around comes around
 - 4. Hang in there things are bound to get better - BROMIDES - trite sayings
 - a) Ain't gonna work
- E. To the agonized should of the one who is suffering - oh nothing less than the voice of God will do and that is where this promise steps in - no matter what in all things God is working those things for your good.
 - 1. Miscarriage or young child dies
 - 2. Cancer diagnosis

3. Mom dies from lupus and Dad dies suddenly from a heart attack
 - a) Speaks gently but firmly "I am working this for your good"

F. Application

1. In your greatest trial - in your devastation and agony - in your groaning - bring your tears and lie before your God and hear him speak to you "I am working all things for your good" - know it and believe him when the whole world fails to make sense.

Illustration: Father with baby who can't eat because of life-saving surgery

- a) If we knew everything, he knows we would agree with him
2. We have a sovereign God - who is good - who is kind - who is mighty - who is causing even your greatest heart-breaks to work for your good - trust him

**I have called Thee Abba Father,
I have stayed my heart on Thee
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather;
All must work for good to me. (Jesus I My Cross Have Taken)**

II. The Requirement Needed to Receive the Promise

- A. For this glorious promise to be true one must meet certain requirements / qualifications - this promise is for "those who love God and who are called according to his purpose"
 1. Not everyone experiences the sovereign working of all things for our good - it is the promise and the privilege for those who "love God"
 - a) Those who have an internal disposition of affection for God himself - not just appreciation or agreement with certain doctrines or truths - love for God
 - b) Who are those who love God? None other than the blood-bought, Spirit-filled, redeemed, adopted people of God
 - (1) Lest we be tempted to see this arrangement as something like we drum up enough love for God and he responds by being good to us - we must understand that all who love God - Christians - love God because he has first moved toward us in love

We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

- B. That is why the description of "those called according to his purpose" help to tease out the reason why we love God at all
 1. Why is there love in the heart where before there was enmity against God, coolness, detachment, apathy
 - a) BECAUSE...GOD...CALLED YOU INTO THIS LOVE!
 - b) JESUS - many are called but few are chosen - general call of the Gospel
 - c) When Paul speak of "those called" throughout his letters he is not typically addressing the general call that goes out to all people through the proclamation of the gospel - the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus - this call - oh this call has a profound effect upon the souls of the elect - V. 29 - THOSE HE CALLED - Behold the RISEN CHRIST OF THE CROSS and we come!
 - (1) Effectual call that goes out and definitively draws in those according to the plan and foreknowledge of God accomplishing God's eternal decree and purpose in Christ

Jesus to make for himself a family out of low-lives, sinners, rejects, the poor and the weak

Illustration: Falling in love - why? There are beauties and charms that move us toward them love. God's call causes our hearts to see something of the glories and beauties and charms of Jesus Christ and we cannot help but love him.

2. Our love for him is the fruit of his love for us revealed in his effectual call toward us in the Gospel.
- C. What is the promise? God works all things for our good
- D. What is the requirement? That we love God and are called according to his purpose
1. His grace has caused our hearts to wake up in love for him - his dedication is to work in all things for our good
 2. SO...IN EVERY REGARD..GOD IN HIS GRACE STANDS PREEMINENT OVER ALL THESE THINGS
 - a) He loves us into our love for him - he effectively calls us to himself
 - (1) HE has worked to give you a heart that loves him - he is working in every detail of your life for your good
 - (a) THIS IS GRACE! THIS IS GRACE!
- E. World is not a random mess! You are not a random Christian - he is personally addressing you his beloved that he has called you and dedicated himself to you
- F. Application
1. CALL TO UNBELIEVERS - IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE
 2. Beloved as you hear this promise let your love for God renew in the awareness of his personal care for you - express your love by believing - even in - ESPECIALLY in your weakness and suffering
 3. Beloved wield this promise with care
 - a) Don't just break it out and slap it on others in a ham-fisted, unthoughtful way
 - b) When we encounter someone in who is experiencing suffering and grief -Sometimes we must put our hands over our mouths even when the complaining arrives and weep with those who weep - oh their will time in due course - dare not make the suffering feel as this is just easy - believe the promise and get over it
 - c) But we do have a promise - God is working in all things for our good
 - (1) Every challenge, every failure, every weakness is an opportunity to trust God for his goodness.
 - (a) When you are mocked / ridiculed for your faith or stance on biblical morality
 - (b) When the sickness arrives and we experience deep loss
 - (c) In the suffering that does not go away
 - i) BELOVED hear this - Your God is not abandoning you he is working in you for your good.
 - (1) Transforms our whole outlook on life

The universe is not a mechanism run by blind chance; it is run by a person—and not just any person, but our Father, We don't need to fear life and circumstances. (Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, p. 43)

Close

What a promise! What a kind and gracious promise! Each Christian present here - you are objects of his special love and he is working. God intends that you take hope and joy in the promise that not matter what is going in your life God is working it for your good.

Do you realize that, if you are in Christ, you are God's personal project? He has undertaken to make you glorious. So, if this is what God values for you, let this be wha you value for yourself and those you love. Let your heart embrace as good what God's heart embraces as good. Let nothing in your heart resist the work of God in you. Rejoice in your hope of the glory of God. Set your heart on being made like Christ, and do not set your heart on the expendable things of this life. If you invest your affections wisely, if your emotional commitments line up with God's emotional commitments, your happiness becomes invincible. (Ray Ortlund Jr., *Supernatural Living for Natural People*, pp. 120-121)

- Set your heart on being made like Christ
- Let the commitments of your life line up with God's commitments expressed in his working in your life
- Happiness will become invincible even in the sorrows and tears

Oh, how great and precious is this promise. God comes to us and makes promises.

Your life as it is right now, with its messiness and weakness is raw material for God to work for your good

All ratified and sealed in the blood of Christ - his covenant and oath made to us by his grace. What a promise. What a Savior!

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