

Does everything work out for good?

Many of us were brought up on Romans 8:28. It pulled us through times of the depression, the war, illness, times of disappointment. This text is one of the most meaningful passages in Bible! However, this text is not **passive**, accepting an attitude of "*what will be, will be.*" Nor does it mean to accept every thing that comes our way as being from God.

I must admit that, at times, the meaning of this text seems UNCLEAR because those who love God most, often seem to get the worst life can dish out. And, then too, there are those who attempt to "*sweep their mistakes under the rug*" by simply quoting, "*all things work together for good!*"

It is true that everything does "*work out*" one way or the other, either for **good** or **ill**! The very **same** thing can happen to two different people, however, one person is destroyed by it and the other person is strengthened by it, therefore, it is not "**things**" that are different, but, rather, it is the "*working together of things.*" Things do not work together for good **all by themselves**, nor do they work out together for good automatically. This text does not mean that we are to *passively* submit to whatever happens, but, rather, what this text *does* teach is that God will help us to make "*things work out together for good*" out of **whatever happens to us** . . . instead of the worst!

IT IS NOT WHAT **TO** HAPPENS TO US, BUT, RATHER, WHAT HAPPENS **IN** US

Did you ever notice how most of us pray about "*outside*" things, instead of what happens "*inside*" of us? Instead of praying about the things that confront us, we ought to pray about the attitude by which we confront things.

Romans 8:28 is not saying, "*Keep a stiff upper lip,*" or, "*Grin & bear it.*" Scripture often makes the point that the **REMEDY FOR OUR ILLS, LIES WITH OUR ATTITUDE**. It is altogether unscriptural to tell everyone, "*All things work together for **THEIR** good.*"

However, this text, when interpreted in the context in which it is found, will bring unlimited comfort, and cheer, in time of testing.

The first two words of Romans 8:28, "*We know,*" gives us an unwavering confidence. When our hope has failed, we suffer unmerited harm, or someone has deliberately been abusive toward us, **God can make everything turn out for our good!**

This Biblical truth renders **complaining** unthinkable! That is the very reason that God tells us, "*In everything give thanks!*" I know this seems impossible, but that is what the Bible teaches. **In everything give thanks** . . . things adverse, or things of advantage . . . because they can turn out for good! Who can remain unthankful in face of this claim?

This sounds great in the Sunday morning service, but, when we are faced with devastating sorrows, it sounds rather glib, and divorced from grim reality! And, when we are honest with ourselves, there are times when we are secretly skeptic, and lurking in the back of mind is a vague suspicion that this text doesn't work out for us.

However, when this verse is interpreted in its context, with full value given to each word, there isn't any verse in Bible that can give such poise, and serenity, in midst of tragedies, trials, and disappointments.

The key to understanding God's meaning in this text is to remember that this verse must not be isolated from its context! It must not be divorced from its **conditional clauses**.

CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

Notice that there are two clauses in this text which determine, and limit, its application:

(1.) *“To them that love God,”* and,

(2.) *“To them that are called according to God purpose.”*

The simple fact is that, **all things do NOT** (without qualifications) **work together for good** for everybody and this verse does not so teach, but, rather, it teaches that *“all things work together for good . . .”*

1. *“For them that love God”*

ONE MUST BE IN A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The promise of Romans 8:28 is to the members of God's family...to those enjoying, and manifesting, family affection. Love always trusts *even when it cannot discern!*

2. *“To them who are the called according to His purpose”*

ONE MUST BE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD'S CALLING

Romans 8:28 is for those who have a knowledge that they are *“called according to God's purpose!”* One translation states this text this way, *“God's purpose unfolds to those whom He has called and who love Him in return.”* The promise of this text is not to the rebellious, or those out of sympathy with God's purpose. For anyone to be entitled to the comfort of this verse, he must be within the category that is laid down in this verse. If we fulfill our part, it is inconceivable that God's perfect design could be thwarted by any adversity!

FOUR TRUTHS FULL OF COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT

1. **GOD'S PLAN IS BEST** – *“All things work together **FOR GOOD** . . .”*

The understanding of these two words, *for good*, is important, because the good God promises (*in His long-sighted love*) doesn't always seem good at the time. What happens to us may even appear to be disastrous because we are apt to view from a **temporal** viewpoint!

For instances, Job, at the time of his affliction, did not attribute his trials to blind chance, or even Satan, but, rather, he said, “*The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*” It was as Job **co-operated** with God's plan that God could then take the evil acts of Satan and make them *work out for good!* Job emerged from his trial **enriched**. We have been victimized by a “*materialistic civilization*” and therefore, we equate “*good*” in terms of *temporal* comforts and fail to grasp God's concept of what is “*good.*”

Thus, Romans 8:28, intended to be soft pillow for our hearts has become a heard problem for our head! Just what is the “*good*” that this verse is speaking of? The answer is found in the very next verse. Verse 29 is clouded with words like “*foreknow,*” “*predestinate,*” and “*conform,*” however, the meaning is, “*God's ultimate design for our life is that we be made like unto His Son . . . that our character, and dispossession, be molded into Christ's image!*”

Anything, which makes us, more like Christ is good, irrespective of the effect it has on our comfort, success, or pleasure for the time being. It does seem that **Christ-likeness** does not thrive in midst of material comforts and that “*success*” often is the deathblow to a life of holiness.

2. GOD'S PLAN FOR US IS ACTIVE – “*All things WORK together for good.*”

We need to discern God busily at work in our lives, even in the heart-breaking, unwelcome happenings! God's Word teaches that, “*God is at work in us.*” Ephesians 2:10 states, “*We ARE [present tense] His workmanship.*”

It does seem, at times, that God is doing *nothing* in our life, however, we must not be impatient at what seems to be inactivity on God's part, or make the mistake of taking things in our own hands, but, rather, remember these “*happenings*” are the raw material from which God is weaving His design for our life. It is only as we introduce God into these events, that order (or **good**) can emerge out of chaos!

3. GOD'S PLAN IS ALWAYS INCLUSIVE – “*ALL things work together for good!*”

Everything, in every sphere of our life, is under God's control! To comprehend this, is **BREATHTAKING!** Many are willing to admit that, “*Life on whole is subject to God's providence,*” however, that is **NOT** what Romans 8:28 teaches, but, rather, it states that, “*Every detail in our life is the object of God's loving concern.*” Jesus stated in Matthew 10:29, that even a sparrow that falls to the ground does not go unnoticed by God! The circumstances of our life are ordained of God. To those who (1) have a family relationship with God and (2) are seeking His purpose for their life, there is no such thing as “*chance.*” God is interested in **every** detail of our life and has permitted, [if not designed], the happenings of our life **FOR HIS WISE PURPOSE!**

This does not suppose that <i>everything</i> that happens to us is God's perfect will.
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Many things that happen to us are the result of ignorance, stupidity, or, even, rebellious disobedience on our part. *Or, it can be on the part of someone else* and we, by our relationship to them, reap the consequences of their actions! Nevertheless, the moment we put God first, and are willing to "fit into His purpose," Romans 8:28 is a promise we can claim!

4. THE EVENTS OF OUR LIFE ARE NOT UNRELATED

- "All things work **TOGETHER** for good"

Phillip's translation of Romans 8:28 states, "Moreover we know that to those who love God, who are called according to His plan, everything that happens fits into a preconceived pattern for good." The events in the life of the one described in Romans 8:28 are not **un**related

For instance, a doctor's prescription may have a number of drugs, any one, of which taken in isolation, could bring, not only bring harm to the patient, but, may even be poisonous, however, those ingredients, **blended together, under the direction of a skilled, and experienced, physician, can achieve good.**

One Translation of Romans 8:28 states, "We know that God **intermingles** all things for good for them that love Him." The experiences of our life, must not be looked upon because, if seen in isolation alone, may be anything but "**good**," however, **blended together**, they can result in God's "good."

We are apt to ask, concerning some event in our life, "**How can this work out for good?**" The answer is, "**Wait until the Great Physician has finished writing his prescription.**"

Another illustration would be an artist blending his colors together for a beautiful picture. The unskilled eye cannot see the object the artist has in mind and even remark that it doesn't look like much of a picture. The artist simply replies, "Wait until I'm finished!"

Our life is like a beautiful painting! The colors of our life are not all the same, but, rather, are different hues. Some of the colors are bright and beautiful, while others are dark and somber. But, they can all "*working together*" to contribute to something of beauty.

*Not until the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the pattern and explain the reason why
The dark threads are as needful, in the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver for the pattern He has planned*

ONE MORE POINT

In time of trial, the temptation is for us to feel that, "*This present circumstance is an*

exception to Romans 8:28!” If that is so, then this text is **null** and **void** and has no meaning, because God said, “*All things . . . everything . . . works together for good.*”

1 Corinthians 13:9-12 states, “*We know in part . . .* [The word ‘*part*’ means fragment; Moffett translates, “*a bit*”] . . . *but when that which is perfect is come . . .* [That is, when our knowledge is complete, or whole] . . . *now we see through glass darkly . . .* [Or, now we see things dimly, like looking through a very poor mirror] . . . *but then face to face . . .* [when we see Jesus] . . . *now we know in part . . .* [we only know fragments of truth] . . . *but then . . .* [when we see Jesus] . . . *shall I know even as also I am known . . .* [I will then know as fully as God now knows me]!” – ***Hallelujah!***