

Sermons 2008

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Chapter 1. All Things

READ - *Romans 8:16-28*

TEXT - *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)*

THEME - Our all-knowing, all-seeing Father superintends every event in our lives so that we will be like Jesus.

1.1. Introduction

Let's take just a few moments this morning to discuss a very familiar passage of scripture... one that, like others we memorized as children in Sunday School, is often glossed over because of its familiarity.

I wonder, though, if there is a more beautiful and powerful promise in all of scripture.

Let's see what we can learn from Romans 8:28.

1.2. The Certainty of the Promise

And we KNOW that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1. Certainty is rare today.

ILLUS - In the survey taken in early 1991, interviewees were asked, "Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: There is no such thing as absolute truth; different people can define truth in conflicting ways and still be correct." Only 28% of the respondents expressed strong belief in "absolute truth," and more surprisingly, only 23 percent of born-again or evangelical Christians accepted this idea!

What a telling revelation! If more than 75 percent of the followers of Christ say nothing can be known for certain, does this indicate, as it seems, that they are not convinced that Jesus existed, that He is who He claimed to be, that His Word is authentic, that God created the heavens and earth, or that eternal life awaits the believer? That's what the findings appear to mean. If there is no absolute truth, then by definition nothing can be said to be absolutely true. To the majority, apparently, it's all relative. Nothing is certain. Might be. Might not be. Who knows for sure? Take your guess and hope for the best! (James Dobson, December 1991 letter, quoting George Barna, *What Americans Believe*.)

This is nothing new, by the way:

ILLUS - Pontius Pilate, who when looking into the eyes of "the way, THE TRUTH, and the life" said, "What is truth?"

2. However, we can be SURE about this promise, for GOD DOES NOT LIE, EVER!

ILLUS - Of Abraham, Paul said, Romans 4:21 - "And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

... *it was impossible for God to lie... (Hebrews 6:18)*

... *God, that cannot lie... (Titus 1:2)*

QUOTE (F.B. Meyer) - "If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would cloth themselves in sackcloth; the sun, the moon and the stars would reel from their courses; the universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful fact that God can lie."

1.3. The Reach of the Promise

And we know that ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1. There is no limit to what this promise includes.

a. DEFINITION - (Webster) 1.) The whole of, the greatest possible; 2.) Every member or individual part of; 3.) The whole number or sum of; 4.) Every

b. QUOTE - "All means all and that's all all means."

c. There is no aspect of your experience that is left out of this promise.

- The wonderful and beautiful aspects of our lives are included, and we ought therefore to give thanks for these gifts:

... *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Romans 2:4)*

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

- The trials and troubles that are sometimes part of our lives.

QUOTE (Ray C. Stedman) - "not only does this include the lovely things, but it also includes those heartbreaking and painful experiences where life just seems to collapse around you and

fall apart at the seams. Now, these experiences are sent; they don't just happen. This is the testimony of Scripture to the believer. These things are sent -- everything, without exception -- they don't just happen."

POEM -

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!
How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!
How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out--
God knows what He's about.

- The wrongs that people sometimes perpetrate on us.

Has anybody ever done you wrong? Acted the part of an enemy to you?

ILLUS - A reporter was interviewing an old man on his 100th birthday. "What are you most proud of?" he asked. "Well," said the man, "I don't have an enemy in the world." "What a beautiful thought! How inspirational!" said the reporter. "Yep," added the centenarian, "outlived every last one of them."

When people do you wrong, can it possible work out for good?

ILLUS - Joseph - READ *Genesis 50:14-21* Note especially vs. 20, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good*"

- The mistakes that we sometimes make.

Have you ever made a mistake?

ILLUS - A bank robber in Los Angeles told the clerk not to give him cash, but to deposit the money to his checking account.

ILLUS - The following reportedly appeared in a local newspaper:

Monday: "The Rev. A.J. Jones has one color TV set for sale. Telephone 626-1313 after 7 p.m. and ask for Mrs. Donnelley who lives with him, cheap."

Tuesday: "We regret any embarrassment caused to Rev. Jones by a typographical error in yesterday's paper. The ad should have read: 'The Rev. A.J. Jones has one color TV set for sale, cheap...Telephone 626-1313 and ask for Mrs. Donnelley, who lives with him after 7 p.m.'"

Wednesday: "The Rev. A.J. Jones informs us that he has received several annoying telephone calls because of an incorrect ad in yesterday's paper. It should have read: 'The Rev. A.J. Jones has one color TV set for sale, cheap. Telephone 626-1313 after 7 p.m. and ask for Mrs. Donnelley who loves with him.'"

Some of our mistakes are silly. Some are not. Some are sin. Can God work even our mistakes out for good? Are even our worst mistakes / sins included in this promise?

ILLUS - Jacob, whose past seemed to be catching up with him when he cried out (in Genesis 42:36) "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." But look at what God did as a result of the seemingly bad things in Jacob's life?

d. There is nothing this promise excludes!

1.4. The Mechanics of the Promise

And we know that all things WORK TOGETHER for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1. First, I have a question:

QUESTION - The KJV says, "All things work together..." Does this imply that things "just happen?" Is this a reference to karma, fate, luck, happenstance? How do these things "just happen?"

ILLUS - There is a management technique taught in various management books. It is called "Management By Walking Around" and refers to the fact that if you just wander around long enough, most problems will simply take care of themselves!

ANSWER - They don't just happen. The meaning of this verse is "God works all things together for good..." We might read it this way:

in all things God works for the good of those who love him... (NIV)

God causes all things to work together for good... (NASB)

NO! THINGS DON'T JUST HAPPEN! - We need to see God's sovereignty in this promise!

ILLUS - His sovereignty in the life of Joseph

2. God sees the big picture, that we cannot see.

- There are some individual events in our lives, which when viewed separately, are very difficult to understand.
- However, when viewed "together" with all the events God brings into our lives, they "work together for good."

QUOTE - "No affliction would trouble the child or God if he/she knew God's reason for sending it."

3. God wants us walking by faith - RIGHT NOW.

"Work" is in present tense. We need to believe and trust that RIGHT NOW, God is working in our lives for our good. It's easy to look back on the past, and similarly easy to trust for the unseen future, but the NOW... the part we are feeling and experiencing - much harder.

QUOTE (Spurgeon) - "I find it extremely easy to believe that all things have worked together for my good. I can look back at the past, and wonder at all the way whereby the Lord hath led me. If ever there lived a man who has reason to be grateful to Almighty God, I think I am that man. I can see black storms that have lowered o'er my head, and torrents of opposition that have run across my path, but I can thank God for every incident that ever occurred to me from my cradle up to now, and do not desire a better pilot for the rest of my days, than he who has steered me from obscurity and scorn, to this place to preach his word and feed this great congregation. And I doubt not that each of you, in looking back upon your past experience as Christians, could say very much the same. Through many troubles you have passed, but you can say, they have all been for your good. And somehow or other you have an equal faith for the future. You believe that all things will in the end work for your good. The pinch of faith always lies in the present tense. I can always believe the past, and always believe the future, but the present, the present, the present, that is what staggers faith."

1.5. The Goal of the Promise

And we know that all things work together FOR GOOD to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1. Again, may I start with a question? WHAT IS GOOD?

- There is a "good" that the world would call "good."
 - * Wealth
 - * Physical health
 - * Abundant friends
 - * Success in business
 - * Fame and power
- Does your experience tell you that all things work together for this kind of good?

2. NO, the good that God means here is that which is TRULY good.

- There is a "spiritual good", and that doesn't always equal the world's definition of good.
- We need to desire the good that God calls good!

QUOTE (Spurgeon) - The Christian understands the word "good" in another sense. By "good," he understands spiritual good. "Ah!" saith he, "I do not call gold good, but I call faith good! I do not think it always for my good to increase in treasure, but I know it is good to grow in grace. I do not know that it is for my good that I should be respectable and walk in good society; but I know that it is for my good that I should walk humbly with my God. I do not know that it is for my good that my children should be about me, like olive branches round my table, but I know that it is for my good that I should flourish in the courts of my God, and that I should be the means of winning souls from going down into the pit. I am not certain that it is altogether for my good to have kind and generous friends, with whom I may hold fellowship; but I know that it is for my good that I should hold fellowship with Christ, that I should have communion with him, even though it should be in his sufferings. I know it is good for me that my faith, my love, my every grace should grow and increase, and that I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ my blessed Lord and Master."

- There is the "ultimate good" which is God's true goal in all of this.

...conformed to the image of his Son... (Romans 8:29)

GOD WANTS US TO BE LIKE JESUS! (He's not trying to make us into good church members, or good encouragers, or good preachers, or good soul winners, or good prayer warriors, or good sunday school teachers, or good fathers, or good mothers, or good people... **HE WANTS US TO BE JUST LIKE JESUS CHRIST.**

1.6. The Beneficiaries of the Promise

And WE know that all things work together for good TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.

1. This is a wonderful promise, but it is only for those who know Christ.
 - Defined as "them who love God."
 - Defined as "the called according to His purpose."

2. If you don't know Christ, then this promise is not for you.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

1.7. Conclusion

(REREAD TEXT VERSE, RE-EMPHASIZING EACH POINT:)

And we KNOW that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

This promise of God is absolutely true and certain. You can count on it.

And we know that ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

There is nothing in your experience or in mine that is left out of this promise. ALL THINGS are included in it.

And we know that all things WORK TOGETHER for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Don't let the individual hardships blind you to the fact that God sees the big picture. He is all-seeing and all-knowing, and knows that when all these things work TOGETHER, they will work out for our good.

Don't forget, too, that all these things are working together NOW, in the PRESENT TENSE. Believe Him even now, when it is hardest to believe.

And WE know that all things work together for good to them that love God, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.

Remember, especially, that this promise is for the Christian. If you are here today without Christ, then you are not included in this promise. The promise you need to concentrate on first is a few verses earlier in Romans:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)

Praise God for the grace that makes all things work together for good..."