

# Do All Things Really Work Together For Good?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Romans 8:28

- A. Life often has many difficult moments; often things happen over which we struggle for an explanation. We wonder where God is.
- B. Yet we have this promise - Rom. 8:28
  1. We read it in the following manner: "All things work out for the good for those who love God."
  2. A very comforting idea, if it were true.
  3. We have a hard time reconciling this with what really happens.
  4. Precious, devout children of God become ill, we pray, and they do not recover, and we wonder where the good is.
  5. We pray for safety and happiness for our children and then watch them suffer and sometimes die young, and wonder where the good is.
  6. We pray for war to end, for cancer to be cured, for poverty to be eased and to all appearances these things get worse, and we wonder where the good is..
- C. What are we missing here?
  1. Did God forget or fail to keep His promise?
  2. Is He really there and able to help us?
  3. Is there a hidden explanation as to why He did not work all things out for our good?
  4. Or have we misunderstood His promise?

## I. THE BIBLE PATTERN

- A. David loved God, and God blessed him with a kingdom (1-2 Samuel).
  1. All of David's children died in infancy, died in rebellion, or turned to evil as adults, in spite of how much David prayed for them.
  2. If all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord, where is the good?
- B. Abraham was blessed because of his faith and obedience (Genesis 12-25).
  1. Abraham's family was rife with tension, jealousy, scheming, and lying.
  2. This was in spite of the fact that Abraham tried to do everything right; so, where is the good?
- C. Joseph
  1. Gen. 37-50 - Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob, the firstborn of his beloved Rachel, and Jacob had cleaned up his home by cleansing it of idolatry and vowing to serve the Lord only.
  2. Joseph's brothers take him, intend to kill him, end up selling him into slavery, and deceive Jacob into believing he was dead.
  3. Joseph was sold to Potiphar, whose wife tried to seduce him, and when she failed, he is cast into prison, where he languished for years because an ungrateful person did not appeal on his behalf.
  4. So where is the personal good for Joseph in all of this?
  5. Genesis 45:4-8 - The beginning of wisdom

6. Though Joseph personally suffered harm from others, God used his personal hardships for the good of all men.
  7. Yet Joseph had to continue to love God and to follow His will in spite of the pain he had to endure. He had to trust God that others would be blessed because he passed through the fire.
- E. Job suffered without just cause.
1. He lost his children, his income, his health, the regard of his wife, and spent days arguing with friends who tried to convict him of some sin.
  2. His suffering, while not for his own good from his perspective, was for his spiritual good; he learned humility; he learned humility and more about God through the things he suffered.
    - a. Job 42:1-6
  3. And his suffering continues to bless us with instruction.
  4. Remember that throughout Job's suffering, he did not curse God - Job 2:9-10
- F. The Apostles were compelled to suffer many things for the name of Christ
1. Beatings from the Sanhedrin - Acts 5:40
    - a. They rejoiced because they suffered for the name of Christ - Acts 5:41
  2. Paul was sent to prison because of the sins of others - Acts 16:17-24
    - a. It resulted in the Philippian jailer obeying the Gospel - Acts 16:25-33

## II. UNDERSTANDING ROMANS 8:28

- A. It is true that all things work together for the good of those who love God?
- B. Three mistakes are made that create this erring perspective:
1. A misreading of the text
    - a. It does not read all things work together for the good of those who love God.
    - b. It reads all things work together for good to those who love God.
    - c. Good means the general good of all those who love God, not necessarily the individual good of the single lover of God.
    - d. It reads TO those who love God, meaning from their faith based viewpoint, not FOR those who love God, meaning for their individual benefit.
  2. An invalid assumption
    - a. The general good or benefit for all lovers of God also means my own personal benefit.
    - b. God did not spare His own Son, but spent Him for the general good of all lovers of God.
    - c. What makes us think God is going to spare us from some hardship if by putting us through the hardship it will be to the general good of all lovers of God.
    - d. He didn't spare the apostles, prophets, preachers, etc. so that we could have the gospel; He spent them for our good.
    - e. Joseph, Job, Jeremiah, Daniel, Stephen, Antipas the martyr

3. We define good by our own standards and values, rather than by what God calls good.
  - a. Paul considered his thorn in the flesh a hindrance; Christ said it magnified Him - 2Cor. 12:7-10
  - b. We consider the deaths of the righteous tragic; God calls it precious - Psalm 116:15
  - c. We view the suffering of the fallen world as a cause to doubt God's care; God said it is cause for joy to refine us - James 1:2-3

C. Practically speaking

1. Suffering, temptations, etc., work out for the spiritual good of the Christian, even though we may not think it very pleasant at the time.
  - a. Heb. 12:3-12; James 1:2-4
2. Suffering helps us to keep our perspective of this world and to better appreciate the prospect of Heaven.
  - a. 2Cor. 4:17; 1Peter 1:3-9

D. The bottom line

1. We cannot fathom the depth of the wisdom of God's plan.
2. We can only trust His wisdom that somewhere, sometime, in some place, lovers of God will derive good from what I must endure.
3. And we must find the faith and will to say, "that's good enough for me."