

GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD¹

Romans 8:28²

Introduction: Paul does not claim that everything works out fine for every person whether they love God or not. His thesis is much more embracing and tentative. “Good” in the text refers to the goal toward which all things gravitate conditionally rather than a quality that applies to everything that happens to everyone.³

1. THE PRESENCE AND PERSISTENCE OF ALL THINGS

- a. David referred to abiding “sorrow” and personal challenges “every day” (Psalm 13:2) NASB.
- b. Paul faced a catalog of contingencies “daily;” plus, the care of the churches (II Cor. 11:28) NIV.
- c. Persistent and daily aspect of life, “Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34) NIV.
- d. Job said, our lives are “Short-lived and full of turmoil” (Job 14:1) NIV.
- e. Jesus forewarned believers, “In this world you will have trouble”⁴ (John 16:3) NIV.
- f. Domestic worker, referring to her arduous labor, said it was difficult because life was “so daily.”

2. THE PERIL AND PARADOX OF ALL THINGS

- a. Peril of struggling with the paradox of negative circumstances/events producing good outcomes.⁵
- b. Temptation to be paralyzed by a puzzle/conundrum that requires wisdom not resident in humans.⁶
- c. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways” (Isaiah 55:9) NIV.
- d. Humans are limited, “Who has understood the mind of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:13) NIV.
- e. Your greatest difficulty may produce unlimited potential for good in your life.⁷

3. THE PROVIDENCE AND PURPOSE OF ALL THINGS

- a. God uses every life experience for a positive outcome regardless of the nature of the experience.⁸
- b. It’s about divine coordination, “God *causes* all things to work together for good.”⁹ V. 28 NASB.
- c. Not manipulation, rather in His providence¹⁰ God is at work producing a divinely-ordained outcome.¹¹
- d. Joseph to brothers, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good”¹² (Gen. 50:20) NASB.
- e. We see through “a glass darkly,”¹³ God sees clearly both what happens and how to effect His purpose.
- f. In all things “the Lord of peace himself” gives “peace in every circumstance” (II Thess. 3:16) NASB.

4. THE PROVISIO AND PROMISE OF ALL THINGS

- a. The proviso/condition, to “love God” and be “called”¹⁴ according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28) NIV.
- b. Thus, the promise is not universal but restricted; and, exclusive for those who meet the criteria of v.28.¹⁵
- c. Salvation is the free gift of God but the Christian life hinges on the response to divine requirements.
- d. The believer’s part is to be faithful and trust God for outcomes that are good and bring glory to Him.
- e. Tension between what God requires and how the believer answers those demands.
- f. “Effective fervent prayer” is conditional on personal righteousness if it “avails much” (James 5:16) NKJV.

Conclusion: We are not afflicted, either by chance or to our harm, but by God’s providence for our great profit; who as He chose us from the beginning, so He has predestined us to be made in the image of his Son; and therefore will bring us in His time, being called and justified, to glory by the cross. God will always cause all things to work together for our good.¹⁶ In the Christian life it is never win/lose or lose/win/ or lose/lose, but always win/win!¹⁷

NOTES

¹ Paul, the author of Romans, was “Called as an apostle (missionary).” Romans 1:1 NASB. Hence, a missionary perspective on how God works in the circumstances of life.

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2008), 141. Johnson says regarding Paul’s premise in Romans 8, “He asserted that God is at work through the Spirit even when appearances seem to deny God’s presence and power. In v.28-30 he makes a series of assertions concerning God’s overarching plan for humanity.”

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jesus gives the assurance, “But take heart! I have overcome the world” John 16:3 NIV.

⁵ Albert Barnes, www.barnesnotesonline.org “They shall cooperate; they shall mutually contribute to our good.” (See footnote 8).

⁶ Johnson, 141. “In the ancient world as in our own skeptics challenged God’s control of events and in particular God’s ability to bring good results out of patently bad circumstances.”

⁷ Online. www.heartlight.org/spurgeon/1201-pm.html Spurgeon said, “The worst calamity is the wisest and kindest thing that could befall to me if God ordains it.”

⁸ Martin Luther: Geneva Notes, 1545. God’s providence always works to the believer’s benefit.

⁹ Paul does not say “all things” are good, but rather their nature notwithstanding God “causes them to work together for good.” Romans 8:28 NIV

¹⁰ Johnson, 141. Romans 8:28, “The best way to categorize these comments in the context of the ancient world is as statements in defense of providence (pronoia).”

¹¹ See I Kings 8:33,35,47-53; Deut. 4:30,31; 30:1,2; II Chron. 6:28-31; Job 5:6-11,17; 23:10; Psalm 94:12,13; Proverbs 3:11,12; Isaiah 19:20,22; 26:9; Jeremiah 2:27;22:22,23; 31:19; Ezekiel 20:37,43; Hosea 2:6,7; Roman 5:3,4; II Cor. 4:17; Phil.1:14-19; Hebrews 12; James 1:2-4,12; I Peter 1:7; 4:14. (See footnote 2).

¹² See footnote 7.

¹³ I Cor. 13:12 KJV. Through a mirror “dimly” NKJV.

¹⁴ Albert Barnes, www.barnesnotesonline.org From the Greek *kletos*, can denote an external invitation or call, but here refers to true Christians who had accepted the call and its requirements.

¹⁵ Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 32. “The God who will one day be ‘all in all’ is at work now in all things, [so they] work together for the good of those who love him.” (See footnote 5).

¹⁶ Confirmed by Psalm 57:2 NASB, “To God who accomplishes *all things* for me.” Italics in text from NASB.

¹⁷ Martin Luther: Geneva Notes, 1545.