



When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do

"It's All Good"

Romans 8:28

Joseph was the son of Rachel, born to Jacob in his old age, and was therefore the favorite. In his youth Joseph had two remarkable dreams, resulting in the hatred of his brothers and the suspicion of his father. His brothers plotted to kill him but ultimately sold him into slavery. They deceived their father by dipping Joseph's coat of many colors into the blood of a goat, assuring him that they had found it as the evidenced Joseph had been torn apart by a wild animal.

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an officer of the Egyptian Pharaoh. On a false sexual assault charge he was thrown into prison. In prison he enjoyed the confidence of the warden, and interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker of Pharaoh. He let the butler know that in three days he'd be exonerated and restored to his position. The baker would not fair so well! Within three days he would be beheaded and his body hung on a tree.

Some time later Pharaoh had two dreams that his wise men could not interpret. The butler remembered Joseph and he was called into the presence of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams.

- In the first dream he stood by the river and saw seven well-favored and fat-fleshed cattle come up out of the river and feed in a meadow, and seven other cattle that were ill-favored and lean-fleshed followed and devoured them.

- In the second dream he beheld seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and good, and they were followed by seven thin and blasted ears by which they were devoured

Joseph declared that the dreams were one and predicted that there would immediately follow seven years of plenty, succeeded by seven years of famine.

Pharaoh clothed Joseph in royal robes, made him ride in the second chariot, and required the people to prostrate themselves before him

Joseph began to make preparations for the famine. He gathered corn "as the sands of the sea" and stored it in the cities.

The famine began as Joseph had predicted and covered the entire land of Egypt. The famine extended to Canaan. Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn. Joseph recognized them, but they did not know him. He supplied their wants and they returned to their home.

After some real drama Joseph made himself known to them and sent for his father to come to Egypt.

The children of Israel were thus saved from extinction during the famine and they began to multiply and thrive in Egypt.

At a point during this amazing story Joseph had a revelation about God that still reverberates down through the ages. Upon revealing himself to his brothers and reconciling with them he declared,

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Think, too, of Jacob's perspective. Joseph was gone; Reuben was disgraced; Judah was dishonored; Simeon and Levi had broken his heart; Dinah was defiled; Simeon was in prison in Egypt; Rachel was dead; famine threatened to kill them all anyway. Then there came the demand from the person second in command to Pharaoh that young Benjamin be brought before him.

Listen to what Jacob said:

Genesis 42:36 And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

In fact, "all things" were not against him but were working together according to God's plan.

The truth that Joseph and Jacob learned so fully, so remarkably, in his own life was not just for him. It was a window into God's dealings with all His children. It would be restated in a verse we all are very familiar with, Romans 8:28, where we read,

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

You are a Joseph (or, I guess, a Josephine!). We all are. We can all declare Romans 8:28 for ourselves. It's a promise whose only condition is that you need to be saved in order to claim it.

One commentator called this verse "a soft pillow for a tired heart." Dr. J. Vernon McGee said, "if Romans is the greatest book of the Bible, and chapter eight is the high-water mark, then verse twenty-eight is the pinnacle."

It's hard to exaggerate the encouragement, reassurance and comfort you find in Romans 8:28. All of us have many times 'pillowed our hearts' upon it. It's probably the verse we give others most often in their time of need.

We're going to look at everything before the comma tonight. The second part, "to those who are the called according to His purpose," is explained in verses twenty-nine and thirty. We will find in the explanation that God's "purpose" is that we be "conformed to the image of His Son." He's making us more like Jesus until, one day when we are face-to-face with Him, we who were foreknown by God, called, and justified, will be finally glorified.

In fact, we are “predestined to be conformed to the image” of Jesus. Once you are saved, *nothing can stop it*. God, Who began this transformation in you, will perform it until it’s finished in the day you see Christ in person.

There’s a lot going on between the time you are “justified” and the moment you are finally “glorified.” In terms of our future in eternity, timewise it’s a drop in the bucket. *Or more like a drop in the ocean!*

But it’s where we live right now and it’s important both to God and to us to have a philosophy (for lack of a better term) for approaching life.

There is none better than to stand on the promise that “all things work together for good to those who love God.”

The verse begins by reminding that “we know.” It means we know intuitively. We know it by intuition.

I think of ‘intuition’ as almost ‘superstition.’ But that’s not its meaning. Intuition is the direct perception of truth independent of any reasoning process. It is an immediate apprehension of truth.

You and I have the direct perception of the absolute **truth** that “all things work together for good.” How is it directly perceive? Well, for one thing we are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. His indwelling guarantees that what God has begun, He will complete. His very presence in us proves God is working all things together for good.

Besides that, God the Holy Spirit is constantly testifying to our spirits that everything is really under control and will work out to the glory of God resulting in our good.

You have undoubtedly experienced at least some things working together for good, have you not?

The hard part is that “**all** things” are said to “work together for good.” “All things” means *each, every, any, all, the whole, all things, everything*.

Even bad things? Think Joseph and Jacob.

I can “know” intuitively that no matter where I am on God’s timeline in my life, it’s “**all** working together for good.”

The “working together” is all on God. He’s doing it. I think that is abundantly clear in the lives of Joseph and Jacob. They had no idea there was anything “working together.” Especially Jacob, whose actual assessment was that things were working against him.

So what does Paul mean when he says, “all things work together for good to those who love God”? Does the quality of my love affect His working things out?

This loving on our part does not qualify in any way the extent of the promise. It doesn’t nullify it. It’s not a condition. God isn’t looking at me saying, “Gene, you don’t love Me enough today, so I can’t really make all things work together for your good the way I’d like.”

“Those who love God” is a synonym for *believers*. In First Corinthians 2:9 and Ephesians 6:24 and Second Timothy 4:8 and James 2:5 those who “love” the Lord is, in fact, a synonym for those who have believed.

For example:

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

It’s implied that “those who love Him” are all those James addresses as “beloved brethren.” Christians - all of them - are “those who love God.”

Besides, since God **is** working “**all** things together,” that would include our poor responses to His work, would it not? It would include a Jacob-like attitude that thinks God is really against me.

The only condition I can see in Romans 8:28 is that you are a believer. God is doing His work.

Pam and I had a house built in the San Bernardino mountains. (It sounds more grand than it was!). Our builder turned out to be a slothful drunkard. We were over a year getting in to the house after it was built . It wouldn't pass final inspection! I'd have to track him down at the Golden Elk - the local watering hole.

Our builder certainly was not working at all, let alone for our good!

God is not like that. He is the wise Master Builder of lives. If it seems He's halted construction, then He's working in a way that can't be seen or understood at the moment. But you can be certain He is at work.

The language guys say that "work together," our word *synergy*, is 'active voice present tense.' It means God's work is continual; it never ceases, He never halts.

I don't do anything, per se, as a condition for God to be working. But I'm not passive, either. I can be more like Joseph, believing things are working out when there is little evidence of it. Or I can be like Jacob, wallowing in an attitude that everything is against me.

Since we are those who "love God," we may as well experience loving Him every single moment of every single day. It's to our benefit; it's for our best life.

Think of your kids. You can't stop loving them, or raising them. For their part, they can cooperate with you or they can make it hard on you, but you are committed to seeing it through and getting them grown and gone.

When they resist, disobey, and rebel, they still love you; they're just not experiencing the relationship they could have. They'd be better off realizing what you are doing is for their good.

Parents are imperfect. God is perfect. How much more can we, then, "love" God, enjoy the relationship, knowing intuitively that 'it's all good.'