

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, July 11, 2010 – 6:00 PM
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A Prescription of Promise - Romans 8:28

Introduction: Tonight, I'm going to preach from one of the most beloved and most claimed passages of Scripture in the Bible. It is Romans 8:28 (NIV) in which the Apostle Paul says, "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*"

This verse is loved and claimed by many folks because it is a promise straight from God, assuring them that God is working to make something good out of some awful situations. So, it provides a measure of comfort in the midst of chaos.

As we look at this verse, it sort of reminds me of how a pharmacist mixes medications. You know, if you go to a pharmacy for a prescription, the druggist will take a few bottles from the shelf, mix them together, and create a medicine. Some of the chemicals that are used might be dangerous, even poisonous, but they can be mixed together in just the right amounts to develop a medicine that will heal you rather than harm you.

So it is with God. He can take our problems and the difficult situations that might look harmful, mix them together with His love, and the result will be a blessing - a medicine for our souls.

In our text, Paul was reminding the Christians in Rome of this very thing. Sometimes, God is causing our circumstances to mix together into something that will grow us into maturity.

I've entitled this message "*A Prescription of Promise.*" There are four things I want to point out about this promise of God. Each one reveals something wonderful, and knowing them will enhance our understanding of it. First, let's notice:

1. The Certainty of God's Promise

Paul starts with the words, "*and we know.*" There is a certainty to Paul's theology. All things will work together for good. There are no ifs, ands, or buts. This is an ironclad promise of God. No matter what happens, we can be sure God is going to work it out for our good and His glory. As the preacher F.B. Meyer once said, "*If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves in sackcloth; the sun, moon, and 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.*" But, listen, God cannot lie. And He has promised that all things will work together for good to those who love Him. Next, let's see:

2. The Completeness of God's Promise

"*In all things God works for our good.*" Not some things . . . not most things . . . but all things. Now, we already know how the sweet things work together for our good. We can talk all night about how God has put together our families, our homes, our grandkids, our church friends, etc. We can thank Him for eternity for these wonderful blessings. But what about the bad things? How can things such a broken heart, or pain and sadness turn out for my good? They can.

A. Sorrowful Things Work for our Good

Imagine if a militant Islamic nation attacked and defeated the US, then hauled us all off to a desert somewhere? Could we say that was good for us? Well, that's exactly what happened to the nation of Judas. But notice through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord said, "*I regard as good the exiles from Judas, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians.*" **Jeremiah 24:5 (NIV)**. Now at the time, I'm sure the people of Judah thought it was a disaster, but God actually did it for their good. I wonder if America is headed down that same road. We've had so many blessings, yet we're so sinful. I don't see how we can escape God's discipline, but when it comes, it will be for our own good.

David had a tendency to stray from God, so the Lord afflicted him with sickness. David recognized what the Lord was doing, and wrote, "*It was good for me to be afflicted*" **Psalms 119:71 (NIV)**.

Affliction is sometimes the best teacher. Sometimes we have to be put on our backs to be able to see the face of God. Often a sickbed can often teach more than a sermon.

Adversity can bring about advancement. That was the case with Joseph, who was beaten by his brothers, sold as a slave, then cast into prison for a crime he did not commit. But through a series of God working in his life,

he soon rose to the top of Egyptian power. Then he was able to say to his brothers, *"You intended to harm me; but God intended it for good"* (**Genesis 50:20 NIV**). God causes all things to work together for good.

B. Satanic Things Work for our Good

Paul had an affliction that he called a *"messenger from Satan."* But you know who allowed it to happen? God did. Even Satan can unwillingly become the servant of God. Years ago there was poor lady who loved God. Her landlord didn't, and he ridiculed her for her faith and trust in the Lord. One day that woman prayed for God to supply her with something to eat. That landlord overheard her praying, and decided to cure her of her religious superstitions. He went and bought groceries, put them on her table, then waited for her to get home. When that old woman arrived, she shouted praise to God for meeting her needs. About that time, the landlord came in and said, *"You fool, God didn't supply you with groceries, I did. You think you can credit a coincidence to God, but it wasn't God, it was me!"* The poor lady began to burst out in even louder praise to God. She said, *"Thank you Lord for supplying my need. Even if you had to do it through the devil himself!"*

C. Sinful Things Work for our Good

God can even cause sinful things to work for our good. Do you remember when Peter denied even knowing Christ before Christ's crucifixion? Well, when Peter realized what he'd done, the Bible says that he wept bitterly at his own failure. After Jesus' resurrection, He forgave Peter, and restored him, and Peter was able to use his own failings to strengthen the rest of the disciples.

I know others who've failed in their lives - with alcohol, drugs, gangs, even failed marriages, but God forgave them and has been able to use them mightily in His service. They're the ones who are better able to tell others, *"He can forgive you, too."* All things work together for good, the sweet and the sorrowful, the satanic and the sinful. We can take comfort in the completeness of God's promise. Next, let's notice:

3. The Condition of God's Promise

As you read Rom. 8:28, you'll see that this is not for everyone. There is a condition to it: *"in all things God works for the good of those who love Him."* You can't claim this promise unless you love God. And you can't love God unless you're a Christian. Jesus said in **Matthew 12:30 (NIV)**, *"He who is not with Me is against Me."* If you love God, He will work all things together for your good. That means:

If you love God, you'll long to be with Him. You'll trust Him to protect you. You'll experience His peace in your heart. You'll want to do His will. You'll love the things He loves and the people He loves. You'll hate the things He hates. You'll be watching for His return. And you'll do what He says.

When you love God and do those things, God will cause all things to work together for your good. That's the condition of Romans 8:28. Finally, let's notice:

4. The Consequences of God's Promise

We like to read Rom. 8:28, but it's followed by vs. 29 which says, *"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."* That's the purpose of God working all things together for good in your life. It's not to make you wealthy, or happy, but to make you more like Jesus Christ. God works all things together for good so that you can grow into Christlikeness. God isn't finished with you; He is still arranging things in your life to conform you to Christ's image.

The consequences of God's promise are that one day, you'll be like Him. That may be why God is sending those circumstances to you today--to make you more like Jesus.

Conclusion: I close with a story of: "The Cracked Pot"

A water bearer had two large pots, each hung at the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck. One pot was cracked, and while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water at the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water in his master's house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the cracked pot was ashamed of its flaw, and sad that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream. *"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."*

"Why?" asked the bearer. "What are you ashamed of?"

"I have been able, for these past two years, to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all of this work, and you don't get full value from your efforts," the pot said.

The water bearer felt sorry for the old cracked pot, and in his compassion he said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path."

Indeed, as they went up the hill, the old cracked pot took notice of the sun warming the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path, and this cheered it some. But at the end of the trail, it still felt bad because it had leaked out half its load, and so again it apologized to the bearer for its failure.

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of your path, but not on the other? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flowers on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table. Without you being just the way you are, he would not have this beauty to grace his house."

Each of us has our flaws. We are all cracked pots. But if we will allow it, and if we believe in the promise of **Romans 8:28 (NIV)** – "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." God will use us, flaws and all, to do something wonderful for Him.