

Sonoraville Baptist Church
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God's Promise of a Happy Ending - Romans 8:28

Introduction: Once a farmer went to his banker and announced that he had bad news and good news. His banker said, “Give me the bad news first.” “Well,” said the farmer, “I can’t make my mortgage payments. And that crop loan I’ve taken out for the past 10 years—I can’t pay that off, either. Not only that, I won’t be able to pay you the couple of hundred thousand I still have outstanding on my tractors and other equipment. So I’m going to have to give up the farm and turn it all over to you for whatever you can salvage out of it.” There was silence for a few moments, then the banker said, “What’s the good news?” “The good news is that I’m going to keep on banking with you,” said the farmer.

The promises we make are not always kept are they? But I want to read you a promise from God that is absolutely iron-clad. In **Romans 8:28 (NIV)**, Paul writes. “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 probably one of the most often quoted verses in all of Scripture – maybe second only to John 3:16. We like this verse because it gives us hope in the midst of hopelessness; comfort in the midst of chaos; and peace in the midst of problems. It’s a great promise from God, but this morning, I want to point out some things about this promise that makes it an iron-clad, no questions asked, satisfaction guaranteed promise of God. First:

1. God’s Promise is Certain

Paul says, “And we know.” There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. It is an ironclad promise. Paul is saying, “I know it’s true,” but the question is, how can we know that this promise true? There are at least two reasons. First there’s the certainty of:

A. God’s Character. This promise is not based upon a whim or wishful thinking. It’s based upon the solid rock of God’s character. God is a good God. Psalm 145:9 says “The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.” One of the first prayers you probably learned was, “God is great. God is good.” That’s a great prayer because it says it all about God’s character! He’s great, and He’s good! God is not some mean, spiteful God. He is a loving Father who wants the absolute best for His children. His character is impeccable and without question, totally pure. When God says something, you can bank on His truthfulness and reliability. God has never told a lie, and He never will. He cannot lie. The reason we are certain about this truth is because of God’s character. Another reason we are certain is:

B. Our Experience. Charles Spurgeon, One of the great pastors of yesteryear said, “Once you have eaten honey, no one has to describe its sweetness to you. You know it from experience.” Many of you know Rom. 8:28 from experience because you have found it to be true in your own life.

It was true in Paul’s life. Paul lived to preach the gospel. He lived to disciple Christians and start churches, but for several years Paul found himself in jail in Rome. If that happened to us, we’d probably moan, groan and complain. But look at what Paul said about his predicament. “Now, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.” **Philippians 1:12 (NIV)** Paul was in prison, a bad thing; but he chose to see it as something good because it gave him the opportunity to share the gospel with a captive audience (pun intended) – a good thing! So Paul had learned to try to see good in every situation.

Can you do that in your situation? Maybe you’ve got a dead-end job, but have you ever seen that job as an opportunity to advance the gospel? Maybe you’re going through a difficult time, and things don’t seem to be going your way right now. But have you ever thought about the lessons you could learn from those problems? Have you thought about how your trials could be used to help others know Christ?

If we believe this promise, we’ll begin to look at life’s difficulties in a different light. We’ll start to see the good instead of just the bad. We’ll begin to see that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him. God’s promise is certain. But second, we see that:

2. God’s Promise is Complete.

Rom. 8:28 says, “...in all things...” A-L-L. It doesn’t say, “...in most things” or “...in some things” or “...in 99 % of things...” It says, “in all things.” When God says “all” He means 100 %. Everything. This is a

complete promise. What does A-L-L include? First it includes

A. Our Pleasant Experiences. That's a no-brainer! When good things happen to us, we're happy. Good things usually lead to other good things.

Everyone here would have to admit that God has been good to us. In fact, we've all had more pleasant experiences in our lives than unpleasant ones. Even though we're all sinners by nature and by choice, and we don't deserve any of the good things that we have had happen to us, God has still been so good to us.

But have you stopped to think that A-L-L also includes:

B. Our Painful Experiences. You say, "*How in the world does that work?*" Well, this verse doesn't say, "*We know how God works in all things for our good.*" It just says, "*We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him...*" The beauty of this promise of God is that we don't have to figure it out in order to enjoy it. It's like electricity. You don't have to figure out how it works to light your house, you just plug the light in, and turn it on. The truth of God's Word is that you don't have to figure out the mechanics of it, just appreciate its benefit.

Joseph was a teenager rejected by his own family. His brothers beat him up, threw him in a hole and sold him into slavery. In Egypt, while he was a slave in Potiphar's house, he was falsely accused of sexual assault, thrown in jail and forgotten. After several years in prison, finally he was released, and through a series of divine interventions, he was put into a position of second in command in all of Egypt. God worked all of those things out. And this is what Joseph said to the very brothers who assaulted him. "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done the saving of many lives.*" **Gen.50:20 (NIV)** After all of those painful experiences, Joseph looked back and said, "*You know, God made it good.*" That's the way He works. God's promise is certain. God's promise is complete. Third:

3. God's Promise Is Compassionate.

The KJV doesn't really capture the subject of the sentence. It implies that it's the "*things*" that are working together for good. In the NIV, NASB, and NLT, it's clarifies the meaning by saying that it's God who is working.

If you think about it, things don't work most of the time do they? We say, "*Things will work out,*" but in reality, it not the "*things*" that do the work. In this case, "*things*" don't just work out, but God does work "*things*" for good.

How would Carla or Forrestine like it if I said, "*Those piano keys made some beautiful music today.*" They would pitch a fit wouldn't they? And rightly so! No, you don't talk about those keys - those "*things*" - making the music - You talk about the person. Carla and Forrestine made that beautiful music happen. So, let's stop talking about things working out, instead talk about God working them out.

There are two important things you need to understand about this promise. First:

A. Everything that happens is not good by itself. If you fall and break your ankle, this promise doesn't imply that this would be a good thing. If you're diagnosed with cancer, this promise doesn't cause you can't say, "*Cancer is good!*" Those are bad things that happen. This verse is not saying everything is good. A lot of things that happen to us in life are really bad things.

Neither is this verse is saying that everything that happens is God's will. Sometimes, you hear about something bad happening to someone, and someone will say, "*Well, it must have been God's will.*" NO! NO! NO! Everything that happens is not God's will.

It's not God's will for a drunk to get behind the wheel of a car and cause a wreck and kill someone. It wasn't God's will for those religious fanatics to fly those planes into buildings and kill innocent lives on September 11, 2001. You find me one scripture in the Bible that will stand behind that! Those things happen because of the will of those people who were controlled by their sinful natures. **Prov. 19:3 (NLT)** says, "*People ruin their lives by their own foolishness...*" It's not God's will that these things to happen. It's the sinful will of people who choose to do these things. Everything that happens is not good by itself. But God is so great and so good, He can take even those horrible things and turn them into good. Now here's the second part of the equation:

B. Everything that happens is only a part of God's recipe

In Job 1, we read where Job found out that he'd lost his fortune, his family, and his health in the span of just a few hours. The rest of the book tells of how bad he suffered, yet he had such absolute faith in God, he was able

to say, *“Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. I will surely defend my ways to His face.” Job 13:15 (NIV).* Job was saying *“It’s bad! It’s awful! It’s terrible! But the very worst that could happen is that I’m going die and if I die, I’m going to be face to face with God and I’ll talk to Him about it then!”*

The New Testament interpretation of Job’s declaration of faith is found in **Philippians 1:21 (NIV)** where Paul declares, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* It’s like heads, I win, tails, I win. A Christian can’t lose! Why? Because all of these things that happen, they’re just one part of God’s recipe of life.

Let me try to explain what this means. I asked Dot Clark for her world famous pound cake recipe. Get out your pens ‘cause here it is: 3 cups of sugar. 1 1/3 cup of Crisco. 6 large eggs. 3 cups of plain flour. 8 oz. Sour Cream. ¼ tsp baking soda. 1 ½ teaspoon vanilla and ½ tsp almond flavoring.

Now, take those ingredients by themselves and they’re not very appetizing are they? I mean how would you like to sit down with 3 cups of sugar or 3 cups of flour, and wolf that down? Does a gob of Crisco by itself sound yummy? How about 6 raw eggs? Could you handle that sliding down your throat? Is a cup of sour cream really finger-lickin’ good? No! But let Dot Clark mix them all together and bake it, and what comes out is heavenly!

Well, the nature and character of God is such that He can take these bad experiences of life, which by themselves, aren’t very pleasant and often bitter, mix them all together, and put them in the oven of His omnipotence and cook up something the Bible says is for your good and for His glory.

Of course, the greatest example of that is the cross of Jesus. God watched His only Son being arrested and God must have thought, *“That’s not good.”* Then He saw Him being whipped until his back was a bloody mess, and He thought, *“That’s awful!”* Then He watched as Jesus was blindfolded and hit in the face with a stick, and the Father must have thought, *“That’s terrible!”* Then they put a crown of thorns on His Son’s head, and God thought, *“That’s disgusting!”* Then they nailed His Son’s hands and feet to a cross and lifted it up and for six hours He hung there bleeding in agony. And the Father must have thought, *“That’s repulsive!”*

But then God took all of those things that were foul and detestable and used them so that every one of us can have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life and God said, *“Now that’s good!”* The cross is the greatest proof of Romans 8:28.

God’s promise is certain, it’s complete in all things, and it’s compassionate. But finally, we see that:

4. God’s Promise Is Conditional.

There are some conditions attached to God’s promise. It’s an iron-clad guarantee, but it’s limited. You know what a limited guarantee means don’t you? If you buy a hair dryer and use it as a whirlpool bath, not only will you get electrocuted, but you’re not going to get your money back either. Why? You didn’t meet the conditions of the guarantee. It says *“Don’t submerge in water!”*

Well, God’s promise is limited in its audience. It’s not for everyone. The last half of this verse tells us who the audience is. It says it is to, *“...those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”* Anyone who doesn’t meet those conditions cannot claim this promise. First, ask yourself:

A. Do I have a love for God? Do I have a close, personal, intimate relationship with God? You can’t love Him unless you know Him but if you know Him personally and intimately, you’ll love Him. And you can’t say you love God if you don’t love other people either. That’s the catch! Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* And one of His commandments is *“Love one another.”* In fact, **1 John 4:20 (NIV)** says, *“If anyone says ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he’s a liar.”* Do you have a love for God that is demonstrated by a love for people? It’s a condition for this promise.

The second condition is found in the phrase, *“who have been called according to His purpose.”* This begs the question:

B. Do I have a longing to be like Jesus? God’s purpose for your life is found in verse 29: *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.”* God’s purpose for our lives is to make us more like Jesus. Do you want to be more like Jesus or are you more interested in being who you want to be? Can you say like the psalmist, *“As the deer pants for the streams of water so my soul pants for you, O God.”*

If you have a longing to be more like Jesus - to fulfill His purpose in your life, then God will work all things out for your good and Romans 8:28, is yours to claim.

Conclusion: I went to my uncle’s funeral on Wednesday very heartbroken. You see, I remember a time in my childhood when my uncle wasn’t a Christian, and he was actually scared away from church by the actions of an

overzealous evangelist who called him out during an invitation. But as the preacher spoke of my uncle, my heart became overjoyed, because I heard some great news. In 2003, my uncle called this preacher who spoke at his funeral to his hospital bedside, and there he gave his life to Christ, and lived the last 8 years of his life with the assurance that his eternal destination was secure in Christ. It was a happy ending to what could have been a tragic life. God worked it for good.

If you really love God and have a desire to be like Jesus, then you can claim Romans 8:28. You'll always have a happy ending.

If not, you can make happy ending of this service by giving your heart to Christ. It will make us all happy, and even the angels in heaven will be happy. They'll start singing and rejoicing. But above all, it will make God happy because another sinner will be saved. Another lost soul will have been found. And you'll have a happy ending.