

The Most Famous Pain-Relieving Verse in the Bible

The Bible says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). In all my years as a Christian and being involved in Christian work there is never a more used verse (including by this pastor) than Romans 8:28 to give to suffering individuals or families in times of crisis, be it small or catastrophic. We almost use it like a physician would treat a common cold. “Go home, drink plenty of liquids, get plenty of rest, take two aspirin and call me later.” Allow me to slightly revise what we may say to a fellow suffering believer: “Go home, and as you pray, rest in the Lord, claim Romans 8:28 and call me later.”

I want us to continue using this great, promise-filled verse. It will be encouraging for all of us to know better what it means. First of all, let’s talk about what it does not mean. It does not mean troubles will not come to a Christian. Jesus said, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Our Lord promises us we shall have tribulation or trials. It is well that we should be reminded that we might also be of good cheer because He has overcome this world that persecutes us. Returning to the subject of suffering for all of us, although we are thankful it is not continual, it is inevitable. You might say it is not a matter of “if” but “when” we ever suffer.

Also, Romans 8:28 is not saying that all things are working together for non-Christians. To be radical in illustrating, allow me just three biblical references: “But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:36). “And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee” (Deuteronomy 30:7). “And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee” (Deuteronomy 7:15). Borrowing from a popular phrase, “Enough said.” We cannot honestly give comfort to someone outside the family of God with Romans 8:28. We can point out that God is merciful and loving and that they too would be recipients of His promise if they would repent and believe. But this verse is specifically a claim for those who love God and have obeyed His call to salvation.

Now here’s where the blessing comes – what does the verse mean?

1. We can take God at His Word.

“And we know...” is the first portion of the promise that will be helpful to claim. There are some wonderful verses in the Bible that comfort us with important things we can and should know. For instance: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13). “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Corinthians 5:1). In the same way we can know we are saved and going to heaven, we can also know that troubles are ordained or allowed by God for reasons sometimes defying (temporarily) our present understanding. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

2. God must approve everything that touches or involves us.

Romans 8:28 goes on to say, “...that all things...” All means all! In the book of Job, it reads, “Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land” (Job 1:9,10). Satan asked God two questions with an insightful follow-up statement. The Devil asked, “Is there not a good reason why Job serves You?”

Isn't the reason he serves You is because You have protected him with a hedge and I cannot break through?" Then he affirms, "You have blessed him and everything he has." We see that great trials came to Job, but the Devil had to receive permission from God.

3. There is Divine synchronization in God's plans.

Our verse says, "...work together...." This is a sanity saving phrase. When it seems like we are coming apart, we can rest assured God is on time, working every detail of His plan for our good and His glory. In John 9:1-3 says, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Our Lord points out that it was not because of wrong that was committed that this man was born in a state of darkness. It was so that the works of God would be manifested in the blind man's life. When we don't have our "cookie-cutter" answers to our finite driven questions, we must rely on God's wisdom and providence. It has been correctly said, "When you cannot track Him, trust Him."

4. Good shall come from all God's actions and allowances.

Two words from our text ring true to the believer's senses, "...for good...." We may not always understand how or when the good "kicks in," but rest assured, good is on the way. Allow me to inject a personal anecdote. When my wife and I and our oldest child, Heather (just a baby) were traveling to a meeting in which I was speaking many years ago, we had a minor mishap. While feeding Heather green beans, her little booty-covered foot did a kick like an NFL player to her green beans that sent them sailing into the windshield, dashboard and much of the front interior of the car. Automobiles are not equipped with inside windshield wipers, and even so, what we were going to have to do required some elbow grease and a little soapy water. It was amazing how much time was consumed in cleaning up a big mess caused by a very little and innocent girl. When we got back on the road, not even one mile down the freeway there was a major life-taking multiple car wreck that involved some trucks and vehicles that I remember had just passed us moments before the green bean fiasco. I am certain with the timing and recognition of the vehicles involved that we would have been involved possibly to the point of losing every life in our car. Here's the good that I want to bring out: our kids are not perfect, but as a dad I could not be happier with the life of an adult than I am our precious girl Heather. She is a thirty-year-old mother in the perfect will of God. Her husband is the band director of one of the finest Christian schools in all of America (and I am not parentally exaggerating). She is faithful to her church, her husband and principles she was taught, teaches violin, has one five-year-old son and at any day, my wife is prepared to join her side as she is now close to the delivery of another son. So this will be two sons that I know, with God's strength, will be reared up in Christian values. I am thankful that just over twenty-nine years ago we had a green bean explosion in our 1974 Chevrolet Impala. How foolish we become griping about seeming mishaps, yes, even what we would call "little things," sometimes forgetting God's greater good is at work all the time.

5. There is holy design and purpose to all of God's actions and allowances.

The promise concludes: "...to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It thrills me to know that in heaven God has a blueprint for our lives! The Psalmist declared, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalms 139:16).

Allow me to leave you with a word of comfort. For those who may be reading this and you just don't see how you can go on any further, think about this statement I came across many years ago, "God moves, seldom early, never late." He is right on time. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

-Pastor Pope-

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