

Series: Romans
Title: God's Providence on Purpose
Text: Romans 8: 28
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Rom 8: 28: 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.

This verse is one that every true believer knows and gains great comfort from. But this verse is misquoted and misapplied by so many when tragedy strikes or something goes wrong.

One thing people say, "*All things happen for a reason.*" That is not what this verse says. That makes all things to happen for blind reason. God works all things. He works all things for a particular people. And he works all things according to his eternal purpose.

Others say "*All things work together for good.*" That is not what the verse says. Again, it leaves out to whom this verse applies. Also, it leaves out the declaration that providence is according to God's predestinating purpose.

Others go a little further, "*All things work together for good to them that love God.*" That still leaves out the qualification that determines who it is that loves God. Only those God called according to God's purpose love God.

But for those who are called, "*AND WE KNOW.*" In addition to all that we have seen in this chapter, God also makes his people know this by showing us in his word—God always works according to his word. God has made us know personally in the court of our conscience by the Holy Spirit. And God makes us know this by personal experience.

Romans 5: 3:...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4: And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Proposition: We know that the true and living God is so holy, powerful and wise to save his people that he works all things together in providence, for his people, according to his eternal, predestinating purpose.

PROVIDENCE

Romans 8: 28: And we know that all things work together for good

We know that God is working all things together in providence.

All things—includes everything. It includes all persons in the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together for the good of his people. All things that come to pass—good and bad—work together for good. Our fall into sin and death in Adam worked for our good because Adam was a figure of Christ to come. As Adam represented all his people and plunged us into sin by his disobedience, Christ represents all his people and makes us righteous by his obedience. The devil and his seed are worked together for our good. Even affliction, temptation, desertion, and betrayal are for our good. All things that make us happy, all things that make us sad. All things that comes to pass great and small are for our good.

All things in God's grace and salvation.

Romans 8: 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

All things *work together* because God works them together by his holy, sovereign, wise ability.

Psalm 115: 3: But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased (Ps 115:3).

Daniel 4: 35: And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Da 4:35).

Job 23:13: But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

Psalm 33:10: The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

Psalm 33:11: The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

And notice that all things work together *for our good*. The “good” God speaks of is not necessarily our temporal or physical good. Some preachers say that if a person falls on hard times it is because they do not have enough faith. That is works religion. God has poor people—who God made poor. God has diseased people—who God gave disease. God has people who suffer great trials and persecutions, even unto cruel deaths—and God gave that to them. Yet, even all that is for our “spiritual, eternal good, our salvation.”

For example, Adam’s fall by disobedience made all his people sin. God is not the Author of sin, man sinned. Indeed, that was a bad thing that happened to all people, even to God’s people. Yet it was for the spiritual, eternal good of manifesting the last Adam Christ Jesus by whose obedience his people are made righteous and God’s gets all the glory!

All the evil things the devil and his wicked people have done throughout history were all worked by God for the good his people. He simply let the devil and wicked men do what was in their heart. Yet, God works it all together for good—for *God’s glory and for the salvation of God’s people*. The rest of the evil God restrains.

Psalm 76: 10: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

The worst act of the devil and sinful man in history is the rejection and crucifixion of God in human flesh. That tops the worst atrocities sinful man has every committed. Yet, they only did that which God was working together for spiritual, eternal good—for his glory and the salvation of his people.

Acts 2:23: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

Acts 4: 26: The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27: For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28: For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

God works together all things that comes to pass for the spiritual, eternal, everlasting good of his people. Too much sorrow would lead me to despair and too much joy would carry me away with this world. Too much success would exalt me and too much failure would discourage me. So, God works all these things together for good. God knows just how much of what to bring to each of his children for our good.

Psalms 84:11: For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Proverbs 12:21: There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Preacher, this sounds like God made everything and everyone for himself to serve God’s predestinated purpose of ministering good to his people? That is exactly right!

Proverbs 16:4: The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

We have king Nebuchadnezzar as the example. God abased that proud king and afterwards, the king said,

Daniel 4:37: Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

God’s ways are not our ways. But all God’s works are truth and his ways judgment. God is able to abase the proud rebel to bring praise to his name. Do you see the Wisdom of God in that? Do you see God’s Power in it? God is not asleep. Proud boasters say, “Why does God allow evil things to happen in this world?” Now you know! IT IS CALLED GOD’S PROVIDENCE—IT IS GOD BRINGING TO PASS HIS ETERNAL, PREDESTINATED PURPOSE—working all things together for good.

Romans 11: 33: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34: For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35: Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36: For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

FOR WHOM?

Romans 8: 28: We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called...

God is working together all things only for the good of his particular people. We cannot make the statement “*All things work together for good*” and apply it to everyone without exception. God says in his word that it does not apply to everyone without exception. The sinner who passes his entire life hating God, hating his Christ, hating his people, hating his gospel is a sinner that God gave over to exactly what that man wanted, his own will and his own way. But God worked nothing for that man’s spiritual good. Maybe God allowed him to learn a little true doctrine to sooth his conscience that he was God’s child while he walked contrary to God. Yet, he never was given faith to believe on Christ. God did nothing good for that man whatsoever.

God works all things together for good to them that love God. He tells us who they are. They are them that God himself has called. If God only said “*to them that love God*” all sinners would apply this verse to themselves. All sinners love the god of their imagination; the god they control. So God did not leave it there. He qualified who it is that loves the true and living God. It is only those that God himself called.

God foreknew us—that is, he foreordained us to salvation through faith in Christ. God chose us in Christ, elected us by free and sovereign grace, loved us with an everlasting love.

God predestinated his people to be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus his Son, that Christ might be the firstborn among many brethren. Oh, how we love God’s predestination because the purpose is to give Christ all preeminence as the firstborn among many brethren. (Col 1: 18)

God called his people in eternity and then called us in time. In eternity he called us sons and made us bear his name. In time, he irresistably, effectually drew us to Christ. This was by his free and sovereign, irresistable grace without any cause in us.

God justified his people in eternity in the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. When Christ entered covenant to redeem his people, he became the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Therefore, Christ freely justified us by his precious blood when he laid down his life for each of his elect. He justifies us in the court of our conscience when he calls us to faith in him. One day soon in that great judgment, he will justify us before the whole world.

And God glorified his people from eternity. When God gave Christ the glory of being our Mediator, entrusting all his people to Christ, God glorified us in Christ. There is coming a day soon when we shall away with Christ’s likeness, perfectly conformed to his image, and we shall be glorified together with him.

Therefore, for you who have been called by God’s free and sovereign grace, God only works good. Everything that has, is and shall come to pass is for your good. From the greatest thing to the very least thing God is working the good of our eternal salvation for God says the very hairs of your head are numbered. The secret place of the most High is Christ Jesus his Son, our Refuge. God says,

Psalm 91: 1: He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty....11: For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12: They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. 13: Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. [he called us and even gave us the love to love him. Then God says of us] 14: Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15: He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16: With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE

Romans 8: 28...according to his purpose.

We have been looking at God’s providence—the things he brings to pass in time. Here we see God’s providence is carried out because of God’s eternal purpose. God’s purpose is God, before the foundation of the world, predestinating all things that shall come to pass for the salvation of his people and the glorification

of his own name in the person of his Son. God's providence is God working all those things together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called. Whatever God brings to pass in time—which is all things that come to pass in time—is according to his eternal, predestinating purpose. Is God really that powerful? Indeed he is!

Isaiah 14:24: The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:..27: For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Isaiah 46:10: Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

Since God purposed it and it was done from eternity—God also does his purpose in providence. God's elect fell in sin with the rest of the world according to God's purpose. Christ justified his elect from our sin according to God's purpose. Christ crossed our path with the gospel and the Spirit of God regenerated us to faith in Christ according to God's purpose

Ephesians 1:11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

APPLICATION

Romans 8: 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

Brethren, we have no need to worry or doubt. We should never murmur and complain. *"If God be for us"* then no one can be against us. I want to end with this familiar song by William Cowper:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind the frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour.
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

AMEN!