

All Things Work Together For Good

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One of the most familiar and quoted Bible references in the world is in Romans 8:28.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

It is printed on plaques in gift shops. It is quoted endlessly by Christian televangelists and is offered as comfort in times of considerable stress or grief. But what does it really mean and what are the conditions for this promise, as there are always conditions with any divine promises - without exception.

One may justifiably wonder if Jeremiah believed that all things work together for good when he was dropped into that dungeon pit by the enlightened community to whom he was commissioned to prophesy.... or Joseph who suffered an additional 2 years in the dungeons of Pharaoh after interpreting the bread and wine dreams of the butler and baker and expecting a review or an appeal opportunity at any day after the promise he was given by Pharaoh's butler... or David who returned to Ziklag after being dismissed from the Philistine army in its imminent attack on Israel but found their homes burned and all their wives and children stolen. David's men certainly didn't believe that all things worked together for good to them, as they started talking about stoning David, presuming that would encourage God's favor again. Even the apostle Paul that wrote that promise that all things work together for good ... was stoned, whipped, beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned and diseased. Yet Paul wrote that we know that **all things** work together for good to those who truly love God.

Every one of us experiences hardships, powerful disappointments, even dangerous situations. These are terms of the curse of sin and death imposed on the world almost 6,000 years ago So how do we understand this promise? How can we confidently and faithfully persevere in the face of disappointments, danger and intense sorrow... believing that it all works to our benefit?

First of all there are conditions to this promise. It is a little odd that all those plaques with this Bible reference don't seem to include that next qualifying phrase:

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.

It isn't enough to simply profess that one loves God. In addition to a legitimate love, one also has to be called according to His purpose. Even both of these two qualifications for all things working together for good have further qualifications. There are actually 4 specific divine calling stages for those within the enlightened community

who will actually become the saints. Three are voluntary and one is mandatory. And what does it mean to **really** love God, according to **His** terms?

How are the same hardships, disappointments, sorrow and dangers of those within the enlightened community who truly love God and are called according to His purpose somehow different from those who don't really love Him and are not responding to each of the progressive callings of God? Those difficult experiences certainly look the same, but according to God they are different.... they will actually work together for good ... all of them, not just some of those challenges, all of them will work together for good... **if** we truly love God and we are among those who are called according to His eternal purpose. The reason I say 'if' is because these qualifications do not apply universally to everyone, certainly not those in the vast unenlightened society of the sons of men, whether Christians or not.. but also even within the much smaller enlightened community.

Jesus identifies the key to a true love when he is asked by one of his disciples at the last supper, his last Passover meal, how he would reveal himself differently to his disciples than to the world in general.

John 14:21-24 *He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas says to him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. ²⁴ He that loves me not, keeps not my sayings:*

Love is the difference between just having the words of Christ ... and keeping them.. between just enlightenment and actual dedicated performance. A true love for God is actually the qualification for an official divine recognition.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 8:3... *If any man love God, the same is known of him.* Paul is addressing the enlightened community here... yet he still qualifies his statement by 'if' ... **if** a man love God. This real love for God, as opposed to only a professed but not a demonstrated love for God.... this **real** love qualifies us to be 'known of God". This being known of God is certainly not a mere technical acknowledgement. It isn't like anyone can escape our Creator's attention. This being known of God is a far more intimate familiarity than it is a technical familiarity. In fact this being known on a divine level is a point of separation not just in whether we truly love God or not but also in the context of our anticipated judgment. When the 5 unwise wedding attendants finally scrounge up some oil for their lamps in that first of the 3 judgment parables Jesus presents to some of his disciples on the Mount of Olives, they come to the door expecting to be invited into the marriage between Christ and the saints, they are forbidden a participation by the bridegroom, by Christ, by our judge...

on the basis that he doesn't know them. We read at the end of that judgment parable: *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* ¹² *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* Now these were part of the 10 wedding attendants watching for the coming of the Bridegroom. Therefore these members of the Ecclesia had been invited to the wedding and expected to participate, but Jesus declares he did not even know them. It certainly doesn't mean he couldn't place them in his memory. He was simply stating they didn't really love him and his Father and therefore did not qualify for that elevated intimate level of being known of God.

This is the same answer Jesus gives in his warning to the enlightened community that not everyone is sincere. **Matt 7:21-23** *Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.* ²² *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* ²³ *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Jesus is actually going to tell some of our Brothers and Sisters that possessed Holy Spirit gifts and were capable of performing miracles... that he **never** knew them, and to get away from him. These Brothers and Sisters had to have been baptized and either been among the 120 on the day of Pentecost or at the home of Cornelius when the Holy Spirit was poured out... or had an Apostle lay their hands on them... in order to actually have the capacity to prophecy or heal or do wonderful miraculous works. But Jesus says he never knew these members of the Ecclesia. Again the qualification for being known of God... is that true love, that greatest of all loves... the kind of love that is the first qualification for having all things work together for our good in our lives, no matter how challenging and initially disappointing those experiences may be. Clearly, not everyone within the enlightened community demonstrates that true love, that love with all our heart and all our soul & all our mind & all our strength that is the 1st and greatest of all commandments. If all of us loved God and Christ to that level then there would be no 10 virgins parable where 5 are rejected or the parable of the lazy servant who hid his talent in a napkin in the ground or the parable of the sheep and the goats with the goats representing the members of the enlightened community that were unresponsive to the desperate needs of the least of Christ's Brethren, meaning other members of the enlightened community.

A true love of God, a greater than all the other loves in our lives... demonstrated in the things we do in our lives and particularly the choices we make... this is the love that is necessary for all things in our lives to truly work for good, no matter how difficult and challenging these experiences may be.

That second qualification for all things working together for good is to be called of God. The saints, those within the enlightened community who will be chosen to inherit the divine nature, have to successfully respond to four progressive divine callings. The first 3 callings are optional. They are simply invitations. The 4th call is the call to judgment. This is not optional. It wouldn't matter if we are alive or dead when that call to judgment takes place. That is not an invitation, that could be declined. It is a mandate. Jesus testifies in John 5: *the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

That is the 4th and last calling of the saints. This is the point at which Christ will choose the saints from among those called to judgment. This is the warning he offered at the conclusion of two separate judgment parables that many will be called -to that judgment - but only a few will be chosen.

Those three previous callings that the saints will have responded to are progressive and highlighted in perfect order in quite a number of ways throughout scripture, presenting a divine refining process in the development of the saints. The first calling is for enlightenment and this is a universal calling, an invitation to everyone on this planet. We are specifically told that our Creator would like everyone to respond to that universal invitation to enlightenment.

1 Tim 2:5 *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴ Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

Since God testifies that He would prefer that all of mankind could come to a knowledge of the truth... it would be rather insulting to God to suggest that any of us were actually chosen for enlightenment, as that would presume God's claim that He would like all men to come to a knowledge of the truth would have to be a lie. That first calling stage of those who will be saints is entirely optional. It is an invitation, but there is no progressing to the next stage, that 2nd calling, without enlightenment. This first enlightenment stage is the qualification for that 4th and last mandatory calling, that call to divine accountability at the judgment.

There are two primary avenues for our Creator's testimony that are available to everyone who chooses to pursue the path of a continuing enlightenment concerning the terms of God's righteousness, what we and scripture call 'the truth'. These two primary avenues of testimony are the Bible and creation. There is a third appointed but involuntary witness and that would be the Jewish people, as God says through Isaiah that they will be His witnesses to mankind. The Bible serves as the written testimony of God. Creation serves as the spoken testimony of God, as that was the procedure by which our natural order came into existence. The Creator verbally commanded everything into existence or into

place almost 6,000 years ago, with the single exception of mankind ... as Adam and Eve were not audibly ordered into existence, but crafted. Everything we can witness around us is the result of the spoken word of Yahweh.

We read in Ps 33 *For the word of the Yahweh is right; And all his works are done in truth. ⁵ He loves righteousness and judgment: The earth is full of the goodness of Yahweh. ⁶ By the word of the Yahweh were the heavens made; And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Let all the earth fear Yahweh: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.⁹ For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*

The features and terms and operating conditions of creation have been the direct result of the spoken words of the Creator.... let there be... light let there be a firmament and dry land and plantlife and animal life. He commanded - and it stood fast

Additionally ... Ps 19 tells us of the universal nature of creation's testimony: *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shews his handywork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night shews knowledge. ³ There is no speech nor language, Where their voice is not heard. ⁴ Their line is gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.*

The words, the testimony of creation - resulting directly from that spoken word of the Creator, is universal and there are no language barriers. That Babel confusion does not inhibit the universal testimony of creation concerning the features of our Creator's righteousness, His righteousness. That first invitation, that calling to enlightenment is offered to everyone on the basis of the Bible, the Jewish people and particularly the features and terms of creation. Paul defines this creation witness as actually being part of the judgment process... that we will personally experience.

Therefore the testimony of creation has to agree perfectly and at every level of scientific examination with the truths in the Bible, that written word of Yahweh. By God's own law, there have to be two witnesses at any life and death trial. As Jesus has told us concerning that 4th calling, our judgment, we will be judged by the word of God. But that word of God will encompass both the written and the spoken word of God... the 2 required witnesses in any life and death trial.

Rom 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

This particular warning is not for mankind in general as we are told this application will be to those who actually hold the truth, but not in righteousness. The only people in the world who can possibly hold the truth is the enlightened community, those who have responded to that first and second of the four callings of God... both enlightenment and commitment. Our point however, is that we are told very emphatically that creation, the things that have been made, is a powerful witness to the truths concerning our Creator's eternal power, and what can be known of God. This witness is universal and no one can claim innocence at refusing the call to enlightenment. Everyone is called to enlightenment. God does not contradict His own righteousness by actually choosing anyone for enlightenment.

Once one qualifies as enlightened concerning the terms of our Creator's right-ness, they have a choice to make. They can respond to that 2nd calling or they can decline. The 'commitment' calling following enlightenment is also entirely optional. There are certainly many in the world who do not respond to that first calling 'to' enlightenment, offered through those 2 direct and 1 indirect witnesses of God - the Bible, creation and the Jewish people. There are also others that become enlightened but refuse to commit, refusing that 2nd calling. These are often referred to as the enlightened rejectors. There is still a 3rd calling from God following enlightenment and commitment. This is the call to performance, not simply coming to an understanding of the terms of our Creator's righteousness... not simply confirming and choosing the validity of that righteousness... but 3rdly - personally demonstrating that divine right-ness in all our words, choices and activities.... our works and deeds - which we are told will be the basis for our judgment, for determining if we will be chosen to become the saints.

These first 3 callings of God -enlightenment, commitment and performance - are subtly highlighted in quite a number of shadows throughout our Creator's two primary avenues of testimony... the written and the spoken word of God... the Bible and creation.

The ordination procedure for the priests in that 1st Kingdom of God demonstrated these 3 callings in their specific order. The priest candidates had to have the blood of the ordination ram placed on the tip of their right ear, their right thumb and their right large toe. The blood signifies life as we are told repeatedly in scripture, and particularly sacrificial life in this context. The ear indicates the ability to hear, as in hearing the word of life... a rather simple association with enlightenment... hearing that universal call to enlightenment. The blood on the thumb indicates that 2nd calling to commitment as the thumb is used for grasping and holding. This is why a man asks for a woman's hand in marriage. He doesn't ask for an earlobe, or knee or elbow. He asks for her hand, asking her to choose him. The third blood application is the large toe on the right foot.

Our feet are certainly used for walking but that large toe is for navigation, like the rudder on a ship. Without our large toe it would be much more difficult to walk in the directions we choose. **This** blood application represents the 3rd divine calling... the call to performance...to walk the walk and not just to talk the talk... to progress beyond mere sincerity to actual performance.

This was the point Jesus was making when he washed the feet of his disciples at the Passover meal before his crucifixion later that Passover day. Peter objected to the Messiah washing his feet but when Jesus explained that If he didn't wash Peter's feet, he had no part with him. Peter interestingly responds by offering not just his feet but his hands and his head.... just like the 3 blood applications of the priest candidate. But Jesus explained: *He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.* The disciples had all been enlightened. They had all committed themselves to the terms of that enlightenment. What was left was performing those terms of that enlightenment... walking the walk. This is why the feet of the disciples, but only the feet, were washed by Jesus at that last supper on Passover evening.

We are priest candidates for the restored Kingdom of God that is expected within our generation, that Millennial Kingdom when Jesus will inherit the throne of David and he also will serve as the High Priest. Just like the priesthood in the last kingdom age, the children of the High Priest will be the priests of that 2nd Kingdom Age. We are applying for that appointment right now, hoping to be accepted as the immortal priests of that 2nd Kingdom Age. We become the children of Christ, the children of the High Priest if we are included in that born again experience of immortalization... and therefore qualify as immortal priests... being the children of the High Priest.

These 3 callings that the saints will have to progress through are also demonstrated in the same manner in the divine ritual for a healed leper so that the former leper could return to the children of God and once again enter the sanctuary of God. On the 8th and last day of this 8 day ritual process the leper had to have the blood of the trespass offering placed on his right ear, then his right thumb and lastly his right large toe. This process was repeated with oil, but there was a 4th application of that oil where the remaining oil was poured onto the shaved head of the healed leper, thereby providing an atonement for the healed leper, shadow projecting the experience of actually becoming an immortalized saint through a real atonement, the substance and not just the shadow being cast by that ritual. Scriptural leprosy was a living death, the body decayed away as if it were a corpse in the grave but was still living. Leprosy was a snapshot of the effect of being cursed by sin, which of course happened at Eden to our ancestors. The ritual of the healed leper that had recovered from this condition is a

projection of the process and realization of salvation, with its 3 applications of blood and oil shadowing those same 3 callings of God... enlightenment, commitment and performance.

These 3 divine callings that qualify the promise of all things working together for good in our lives were also shadow testified in the 3 progressive morning and evening rituals that the priests of that 1st Kingdom of God had to perform at the beginning and end of every day. The first ritual was replenishing the 7 golden lamps with oil, which is a very obvious identification with enlightenment as that is what the oil does in the burning lamps- provide light so all can see. The 2nd ritual was the burning of the incense, which was made of four equal incense ingredients, Psalm 141 and Revelation 8 define the burning of the incense as offering prayer, thereby highlighting the commitment response to that 2nd divine calling. The third and last mandated morning and evening ritual was the offering of the whole daily burnt offering, the single lamb offered entirely on the bronze altar. That whole burnt offering indicated performance, that we offer our whole lives to God on a daily basis. That last whole lamb constitutes the 12th component in those 3 progressive rituals... as there were 7 lamps to replenish, 4 incense ingredients to burn and 1 whole lamb to offer. $7+4+1=12$, which is the divinely assigned number of the enlightened community. This daily procedure of the priests served as a shadow of the 3 callings of the saints numerically represented in the number 12. The fact that this was repeated twice daily, morning and evening is a shadow prophecy of the 2 immortalizations of the saints at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and just after the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when the saints will be chosen from those called to judgment.

So we have these two qualifications for the comfort that can be assured that all things work together for good in our lives. One is the love of God and one is being called according to his purpose. When considering our personal qualification for this extreme blessing we should realize that these two requirements are comprehensive and not an either or choice. In other words we need to satisfy both qualifications and not one or the other. This is the standard divine pattern, like the qualifications for the diet restrictions of the enlightened community in the 1st Kingdom Age. We are told an animal qualified as clean and edible as long as it had a parted foot which also had to be a cloven hoof and they also chewed the cud. If any one of those conditions were unsatisfied, like a pig that has a cloven hoof but doesn't chew the cud... that animal was disqualified and would contradict the physical holiness Yahweh demanded of those who took His name. That animal satisfied 2 of the 3 conditions for preserving holiness... but not all 3 and therefore it was unacceptable. It is the same way we have to take both the memorial bread as well as the wine and not just one or the other.

These two qualifications of love and calling are unconditionally both required to enjoy that blessing of having everything in our lives working for our good, for our benefit.

Whoever among us will actually become saints will have loved God more than anything else in their lives and will have responded to the 1st three callings of God... that call to enlightenment that is offered to everyone in the world, that call to commitment that is offered to the enlightened and the call to performance that is offered to the committed.

When both of these conditions are met then we can be confident that all things in our lives work together for good. Yes, Joseph did have to languish in prison for 2 more years after interpreting the bread and wine dreams of pharaoh's baker of breads and presenter of wine... but that 2 year wait is a shadow prophecy of how the faithful will wait 2 milleniums from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to when they will be drawn out of the prison of the curse of sin and death and exalted and glorified in the earth. Joseph's 2 additional years in prison had purpose. It served as testimony to the faithful concerning the prophetic timeline of the Creator's plan. Yes David returned to a Ziklag that was burned and empty of everyone's wives and children. But in pursuing the raiders and defeating them David and the 400 men who fought with him not only recaptured all their wives and children but the spoils were so extensive David instantly became enourmously wealthy just as he was about to inherit the throne of God's kingdom as Saul he learned of Saul's and Jonathon's death after saving their wives and children. No matter how bad things looked all things worked together for good to Joseph and David. Yes Jesus suffered a horrible experience in his crucifixion and still has the scars in his hands and feet as we know he shows these to the Jewish people he and the saints save from that Gogian attempted annihilation at Jersalem. But it was that violent suffering of death that afforded the subsequent immortalization he was given and the vindication and glory he will experience at his return. We remember that incredible victory in his death this morning, taking comfort in the understanding that if we will love God with all our heart and strength and mind and life and respond to the 3 progressive callings offered by the Creator of the universe then all things in our individual lives will work together for good as well.