

Trusting God in Adversity





Introduction

Admittedly, we have traveled through some deep waters since the beginning of this series. We acknowledged that the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was a “catastrophic personality shock,” which not only impacted all of humanity but the entire created universe. As a result, all of us have experienced the effects of the fall and have our own stories of trouble, suffering, and adversity (Part 1). Longing to know the answers to our unresolved questions, we made a serious inquiry into *The Problem of Evil* (Parts 2 & 3) in order to discover what God has revealed to us in His Word and what He has chosen to keep secret. In Part 4, then, we asked a question that most of humanity has considered on some level: “Is God in control?”

Part 5: Do All Things Work Together For Good?

I remember hearing Chuck Swindoll on the radio when I was living in Ft. Lauderdale. He had been thinking about the words that people love above all others. During the previous week, he had asked his daughter what her favorite word was, and she replied, "Relief." That short description did something to me as soon as I heard it. "Relief." Of course, that's it! Anyone who is troubled, hurting, suffering, in whatever form, longs for *relief*. The headache is gone. The relationship is reconciled. The loved one is healed. The business looking up. The finances improving. However, sometimes relief is not present. When the "Why?" questions are not answered and relief is not in sight, where can we turn for help? What does God have to say to us?

the Spirit,
cession for the saints according to the
will of God.

28 And we know that all things
work together for good to them
that love God, to them ^Rwho are
the called according to his pur-
pose. [9:11, 23, 24]

29 For whom ^Rhe did foreknow, he
also did predestinate to be conformed
image of his Son, that he might

Romans 8:28 in Three Versions

- “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28; NASV).
- “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28; ESV).
- “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” (Rom. 8:28; NLT).



Three Grounds of Encouragement

- The First Ground of Encouragement: Romans 8:18-25
 - *The hope and expectation of the glory to be revealed sustain God's people in the sufferings and groanings of this present time.*
- The Second Ground of Encouragement: Romans 8:26-27
 - *The Holy Spirit helps our infirmity, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*
- The Third Ground of Encouragement: Romans 8:28-30
 - *Knowing that all things work together for good brings consolation and assurance to believers.*

“We Know”

- The very first word Paul uses in Romans 8:28 is the Greek word for *know*.
- The etymology of the word is from *eidon* (video) = *I see*.
- In our text, the word is in the **perfect tense**, “denoting what began in the past and still continues.” Therefore, it means “I discovered (*eidon*) and still enjoy the results,” i.e., “I know.” “The perfect denotes a permanent *state*” (Moulton) = I continue to know. The perfect tense comes to be used as a practical present.
- The word is very common in the New Testament, appearing 320 times.

Passages Using *Know*

- “And **we know** that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things (e.g., the things mentioned in Romans 1:28-32)” (Rom. 2:2).
- “And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations; **knowing** that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint; because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5).
- “**Knowing** that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him” (Rom. 6:9).

Passages Using *Know*

- “For **we know** that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of child-birth together until now” (Rom. 8:22).
- “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for **we do not know** how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts **knows** what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26).
- “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might **know** the things freely given to us by God” (I Cor. 2:12).



What the Apostle Paul Means

Professor John Murray claims that when Paul uses the word *we know*, “he is...intimating that the truth asserted is not one to be gainsaid (denied).”

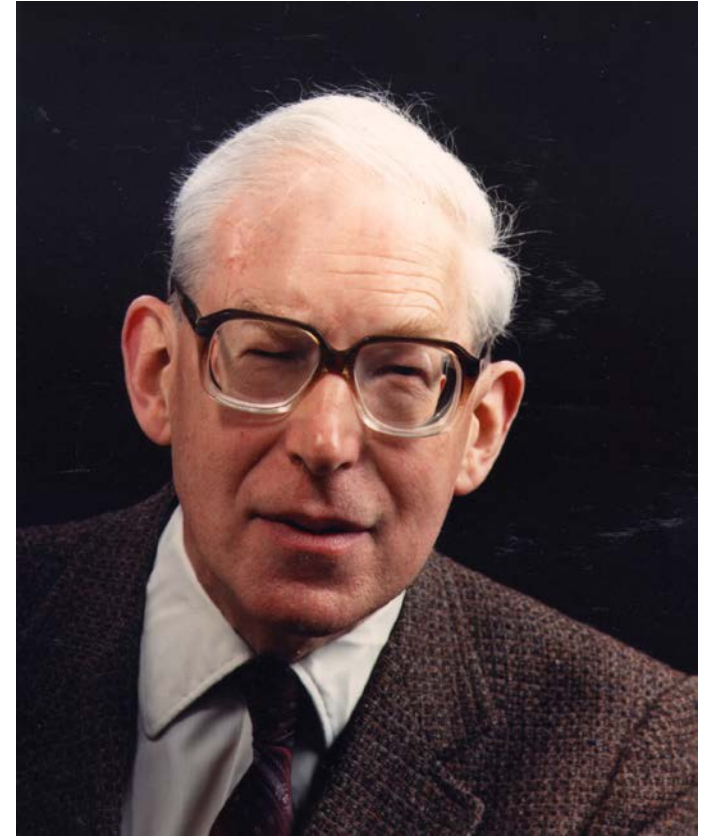


“To Those Who Love God”

- This phrase occurs at the beginning of the text and is in the place of emphasis: “To those who love God, He works all things together for good.”
- Assurance belongs to those who have an attitude of love for God.
- “Love for God is both the most elementary and the highest mark of being in the favor of God” (Murray).
- Why do we love God? The Apostle John provides an answer in his first epistle: “We love because He first loved us” (I Jn. 4:19).
- God calls us to Himself by His initiating love, and we respond in love.

God Knows *Me*

“What matters supremely is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it – the fact that *he knows me*. I am graven on the palms of his hands. I am never out of his mind. All my knowledge of him depends on his sustained initiative in knowing me. I know him, because he first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when his eye is off me, or his attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters.”



J.I. Packer

1926 -



“All Things Are Working Together For Good”

- Synergy is the main verb that Paul uses to indicate that all things **work together** for good. “Synergy is when two or more things interact to produce a result greater than the mere sum of their parts” (Kennedy).
- The subject of *works together* is God. “God must be supplied as the subject of *works together*. Many ancient manuscripts did in fact supply this subject. *All things* thus became an accusative object. **God** is a helper for good in all things. **He** turns all for good for the righteous” (Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary*).
- The word, *syn* (meaning *together*) helps us understand that this means “all things work together, work hand in hand, one thing working in mutuality with the rest to bring about good for God’s lovers” (R.C.H. Lenski).



God Turns Our Losses

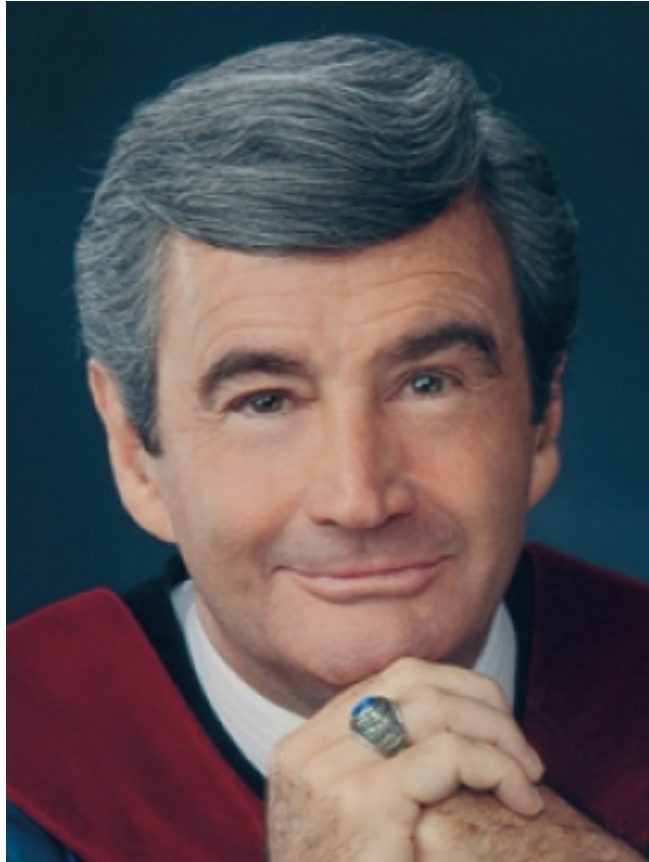
Paul concludes from his statements “that the troubles of this life are so far from hindering our salvation that they rather assist it...The judgment of the flesh exclaims here that it does not at all appear that God hears our prayers, since our afflictions always continue in the same way. The apostle, therefore, anticipates this, and says that although God does not immediately succor His people, He does not desert them, for by a wonderful contrivance He turns their losses in such a way as to promote their salvation.”

- John Calvin



John Calvin
1509-1564

God Will Not Let Go



D. James Kennedy

1930-2007

“God makes it clear that whatever event comes upon us, no matter how grim or ghastly in itself, as soon as it touches our lives, the hand of God will reach down and take it captive. And God will not let go until it yields up its treasure to our soul. That is the promise of the Almighty.”

“Into Our Bloodstreams”

“In theory it is easy to understand the premise that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose, but to get this into our bloodstreams is another matter. It is one of the most difficult tasks of the practicing Christian. It involves not only believing in God but believing God.”



R.C. Sproul

Eight Practices Which Lead to Transformation

1. Prayer of Relinquishment
2. Meditation
3. Patience
4. Purpose
5. Dependence
6. Responsibility
7. Gratitude
8. Trust



One: Relinquishment

“The Prayer of Relinquishment is a bona fide letting go, but it is a release with hope. We have no fatalistic resignation. We are buoyed up by a confident trust in the character of God. Even when all we see are **the tangled threads on the backside of life’s tapestry**, we know that God is good and is out to do us good always. That gives us hope to believe that we are the winners, regardless of what we are being called upon to relinquish” (Richard Foster).



Two: Meditation

“I beseech you to endeavor by constant activity and by continually focusing vividly upon and viewing it to familiarize yourself with this truth. May you thus continually perceive God’s hand working in and by secondary causes in such a manner as if these causes did not exist, but as if God worked these things immediately” (Wilhelmus à Brakel).



Three: Patience

“The appointed day of judgment marks the point in redemptive history when humanity’s response to God’s mercies is brought into account. On this day the blessings received by the impenitent will become tragedies, and the tragedies endured by the believer will be seen as blessings” (R.C. Sproul).



Four: Purpose

“God’s purpose was either to train his people to patience, correct their depraved affections, tame their wantonness, inure them to self-denial, and arouse them from torpor (spiritual lethargy, apathy); or, on the other hand, to cast down the proud, defeat the craftiness of the ungodly, and frustrate all their schemes” (John Calvin).



Five: Dependence

“Let those who do not know God look to the creature and to the means and depend upon them. You, however, must expect everything from the Lord, carefully using the means as means and looking beyond all creatures to God himself. This will engender both steadfastness and strength within your heart. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever (Ps. 125:1).*”



Six: Responsibility

“As regards future events, Solomon easily reconciles human deliberation with divine providence. ‘The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps’ (Prov. 16:9). The eternal decrees of God by no means prevent us from proceeding, under his will, to provide for ourselves, and arrange all our affairs” (Calvin).



Seven: Gratitude

“The proper use of God’s providence will render you an exceptional measure of gratitude and will teach you to end in the Lord as the only Giver of all the good which you may receive for soul and body. It will cause you to observe God’s goodness, faithfulness, and benevolence. This will cause you to rejoice, to praise and magnify God, to speak to others about his attributes, and to place yourself with a willing heart in God’s service” (à Brakel).



Eight: Trust

“Unwavering trust is a rare and precious thing because it often demands a degree of courage that borders on the heroic. When the shadow of Jesus’ cross falls across our lives in the form of failure, rejection, abandonment, betrayal, unemployment, loneliness, depression, the loss of a loved one; when we are deaf to everything but the shriek of our own pain; when the world around us suddenly seems a hostile, menacing place, - at those times we may cry out in anguish, ‘How could a loving God permit this to happen?’ At such moments the seeds of distrust are sown. It requires heroic courage to trust in the love of God no matter what happens to us” (Brennan Manning).

The Tapestry by Edith Schaeffer

“*The Tapestry* speaks immediately of a Designer, an Artist, a Weaver, and of threads being held in his or her hands. We know very well from Adam and Eve and The Fall, that their individual choice brought about the abnormal events that are still happening as a result. Their effect on history was pretty devastating. So the *threads* need to *ask* The Designer, The Weaver, The Artist, time after time to be used in the pattern where He would have them be. It is not automatic.

Mystery? Yes, a mystery that is without solution for the finite mind but completely understood by our Infinite God.”



Francis and Edith Schaeffer

Edith (1914-2013)

Corrie ten Boom's *The Tapestry*

*My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colors
He weaveth steadily.
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly*

*Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned
He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.*