



The Sign of God's Covenant with Noah

"This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Genesis 9:12-15

How many times have we heard the word "uncertainty" during our days of self-isolation? How many people around the world are currently living in fear, worry, or loneliness and are crying out for assurance and some form of guarantee that they will be safe from the pandemic and provided for economically? Where does one look for answers to these and other questions that weigh heavily on the young and old alike? Can we find anything or anyone reliable or stable enough to ease our anxiety and provide us with news good enough to settle our restless hearts and minds? Must we simply wait for scientific, medical, economic, and political solutions to alleviate the realities of our current condition and give us peace?





Those of you who have been around me for any length of time will know of my deep appreciation for the life, mind, and heart of Blaise Pascal. The reason is quite simple: "He was one of the greatest men that has ever lived. Having made the discovery of mathematics at the age of twelve, at sixteen he wrote a treatise on conic sections which is the herald of modern projective geometry. At nineteen he invented, constructed, and offered for sale the first calculating machine. He gave Pascal's Law to physics, proved the existence of the vacuum, and helped to establish the science of hydrodynamics. He created the mathematical theory of probability, in a discussion of the division of gamblers' stakes. His speculations were important in the early development of infinitesimal calculus" (Morris Bishop).



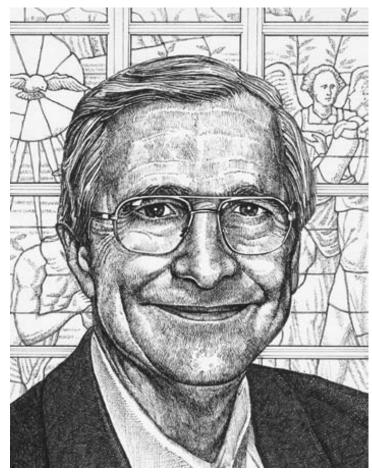


In short, he was a mathematical and scientific genius. But he was also more. "In the lucid moments of a cruel illness, which took his life in 1662 at the age of 39, he wrote his *Pensées* in preparation for an apology for Christianity, thoughts which have affected the mental cast of three centuries, thoughts which still stir and work and grow in modern minds." Consider one of Pascal's insights about uncertainty and happiness:

We desire truth and find in ourselves nothing but uncertainty. We seek happiness and find only wretchedness and death. We are incapable of not desiring truth and happiness and incapable of either certainty or happiness ($\S401$).



Kreeft's Commentary on Pascal



Dr. Peter John Kreeft

Boston College philosophy professor Dr. Peter Kreeft comments: "Truth (our head's food) and happiness (our heart's food) are the two things everyone wants, and not in crumbs but in great loaves; not in raindrops but in waves. Yet these are the two things no one gets except in little crumbs and droplets....To place divine expectations on human shoulders is an infallible recipe for ruin and bitter disappointment."



What we need, then, is a word from a divine being who is powerful enough to fulfill His promises and reassure us that everything will be alright in the end.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), a promise is "a declaration or assurance made to another person (usually with respect to the future), stating a commitment to give, do, or refrain from doing a specified thing or act, or guaranteeing that a specified thing will or will not happen."

This is exactly what a promise is, but who among us has not been the victim of a deep betrayal or deceit by someone who "promised" something to us. Or, perhaps we were the ones who broke a promise.



Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) overheard the following maxim in his day: "Promises and pie crusts are made to be broken." It seems this is quite common in our day. Consider the following examples:

- When I am elected, "I promise to (fill in the blanks)."
- "I would never do that to anyone."
- "I will never be unfaithful to you."
- "I give you my word."
- "I will always be there for you."
- "I promise I will pay you back."





Macbeth

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,

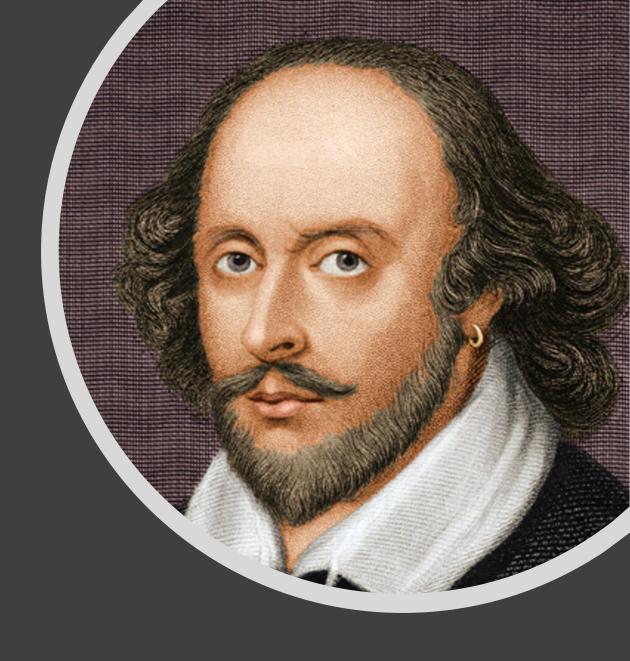
For it hath cow'd (divided) my better part of man!

And be these juggling fiends no more believed,

That palter (trick) with us in a double sense;

That keep the word of promise to our hear,

And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.



Whom Could You Trust?

- Someone who is eternal and sovereign.
- Someone who made a divine covenant with us.
- Someone who is always good.
- Someone who is omniscient and omnipotent.
- Someone who is all-wise.
- Someone who is the truth and is incapable of lying.
- Someone who has kept every promise he has ever made.
- Someone who can deliver us and give us divine consolations.
- Someone who is always faithful.



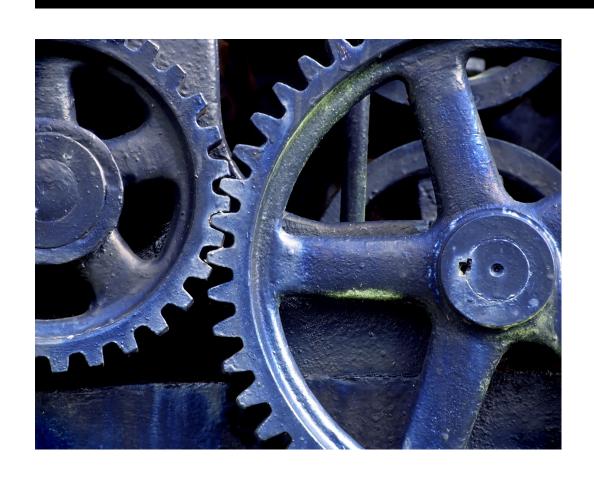
The Triune God Can Be Fully Trusted



"As Father, Husband and King, God is faithful to His promise and purpose, and the promise itself – the promise to be 'your God', 'a God unto thee' – is a comprehensive promise which, when unpacked, proves to contain within itself all the 'exceeding great and precious promises' in which God has pledged Himself to meet our needs. This covenant relationship is the basis of all biblical religion: when worshippers say 'my God', and God says, 'my people', covenant language is being talked....God undertakes 'to uphold and protect us when men and things are threatening, to provide for us as long as our earthly pilgrimage lasts, and to lead us finally into the full enjoyment of Himself, however many obstacles may seem at present to stand in the way of our getting there'" (J.I. Packer).



God's Promise To You



"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).



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.



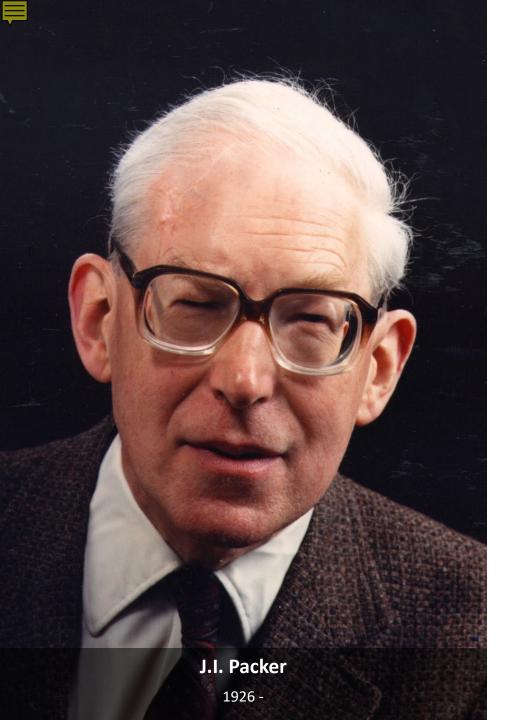
"We Know"

- 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.
- Professor John Murray claims that when Paul uses the word we know, "he is...intimating that the truth asserted is not one to be 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."



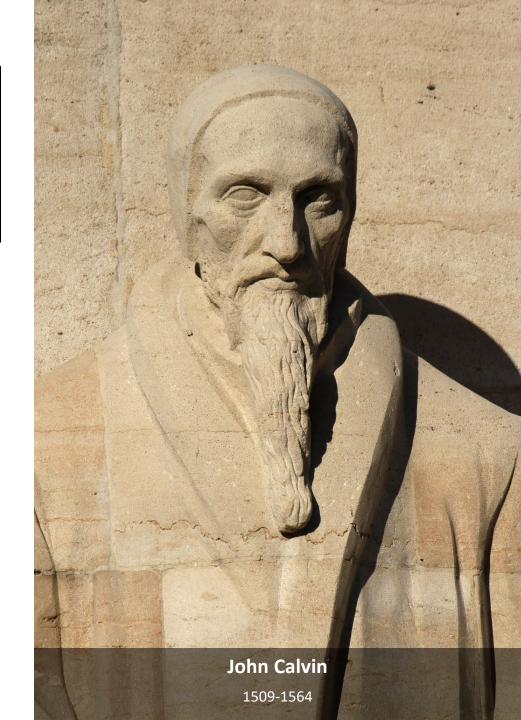
All Things Work Together For Good

- 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" (Dr. D. James Kennedy).
- 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).
- 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).



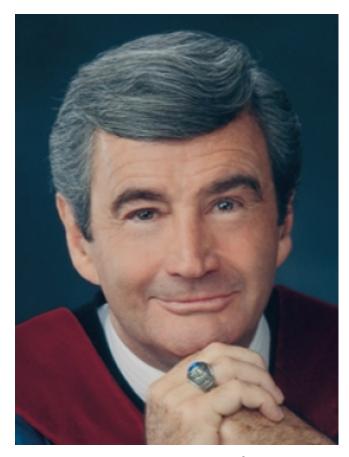
God Turns Our Losses

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 (relieve) 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."





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 1939-2017



Will We Trust God?

"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



A Summary of Romans 8:28

"The bad that we experience is redeemed in the providence of God. This means that God brings good out of the evil we experience. To say that all things work together for good is not the same thing as saying that all the things that happen to us are, when considered in themselves, good things. Yet if these things are working together for our good, then in an ultimate sense it is good that they happen to us. These bad things are truly bad things. But they are only proximately bad things; they are not ultimately bad things. They are blessings in disguise" (R.C. Sproul).