

Do All Things Work Together For Good?

Romans 8:26 has a scripture often misunderstood and even preached *misunderstood*. Taken at face value it seems to imply that God caused or allowed most of the bad things that are afflicting humanity. But as Andrew Wommack pointed out in a lecture on Oct. 9th/ 23, the misreading of that scripture comes because the context is ignored, forgetting the lead in to that fragment, namely the preceding verses, especially the statement, “The Spirit “helps in our infirmities.” That is “takes hold with us” *against* that sickness attacking us. It would be logically odd to believe that god first gave you the problem and then later has His Holy Spirit helping you to defeat the problem He permitted or gave.

When a preacher blows off the whole question of why this tragedy happened by quoting out of context that “all things work together for good” and “someday we’ll understand,”he is doing God’s word and the afflicted person a huge disservice. I can’t think of a more effective way to create hopelessness in a suffering person than to tell him God is teaching him a lesson by putting him through that ordeal. In that case we should all be praying to be sick more or stay sick so we can learn the lesson, whatever it is.

I lost a very good friend who became convinced that it was God’s *sovereign* will or permission that he have cancer. I couldn’t buy that. Of course God is sovereign, with king-like control of everything, but He doesn’t use that power to inflict arbitrary suffering on the children He loves. That would be contradicting His own word. I asked my friend if I could pray for him and he allowed it, but I could see that he believed in the cancer far more than the power of prayer. He died within the year believing that’s what God wanted.

I can think of several afflictions I brought upon myself by ignoring my conscience and having my own way. At no time did I think God gave me bronchitis or ulcers, or hang-overs. But he did help me see where I went wrong, and, through His scriptures,

helped me toward healing and restoration by abandoning the life-style choices that opened the door to Satan's temptations.

Wommack elaborated on that by pointing out that Satan, whose MO is "to kill steal and destroy," via a system of half-truths, lies and deceptions, is behind most of our afflictions, and many others are brought on by our own ignorance or poor choices. As God says in one of the scriptures, "my people die for lack of knowledge." That is, by not believing what the scriptures say.

Wommack further noted that God never lets our suffering go to waste. He will use it to lead us in into understanding that will protect us later. When I had a very dangerous gastric ulcer bleed in the 70's which brought on a 'near death' experience, I came out of it with priceless new knowledge, namely, that prayer works, that there is a spiritual world from which one can watch the medics operating in the natural, and that the ensuing gastrectomy protected me from the spirit of gluttony tempting me toward obesity. I soon lost 20 lbs. and have stayed slim ever since. Also huge was my surgeon, Dr. Kippen's blessing: "Well now you don't have to worry about diabetes." At 86, I'm still eating too many sweets, but I'm thankful I can.

Jesus taught a vital lesson to the woman he saved from being stoned for adultery, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you."

The legalists see that advice as an "*or else*," but Jesus was giving her the loving knowledge that would keep her safe from the enemy's temptations to lure her to her own destruction. (Jn: 8: 1-12) That woman, possibly Mary Magdalene, dedicated the rest of her life to serving her Messiah, and was the first person to witness the *risen* Christ. That is pure grace, the love of Christ poured out in blood to redeem one of his beloved but flawed children from "the curse of the law." (Gal: 3: 13)

He went much further by making Mary Magdalene a key player in the greatest story ever told, and I am convinced that her precious perfume anointing Jesus' feet with her hair the night before His passion, was the one loving thing, that fragrance he inhaled,

as he hung three days in agony, bearing the punishment for the sins of all mankind. (Isa. 52 and 53)

W. R. Rogers' poem, "Lent" ends with these amazing lines: "And only a stone's throw away,/ Mary saw her God./ Did you hear me? Mary saw her God/ Dance Mary Magdalene, Dance, Dance and sing/ For unto you is born this day a king./ "Lady, said he, to you who relent/ I give back the petticoats and the bottle of scent."

So you won't miss-read this: Those were the emblems of her old life of sin. Now, changed and redeemed, she can be trusted with them to "go and sin no more." That is pure forgiveness. Pure amazing Grace. Pure Jesus.

Gene Pinkney 23-10-16- For The Daily News