

INTRODUCTION

Last year I read the book entitled, *Into Thin Air*, written by John Krakauer, an account of the ill-fated expedition to climb Mt. Everest in May of 1996. This was the expedition where some of them got caught at the top of Mt. Everest during a terrible storm and of the five people who reached the summit four of them died. A pathologist from Dallas, Dr. Beck Weathers, was in that group and was left for dead on the mountainside, but instead with a tremendous determination of will he found his way back into the camp although he lost his arm and the fingers on one of his hands. He is still a practicing physician. I have often wondered, “What is it about the human personality that causes people to want to climb to the very summit of the tallest place on earth: 29,028 feet? Well, I have been told by some who climb mountains that when you get to the top, the view is worth the effort.

I think what we are doing today when we come to Romans 8:18. I believe we are ascending to the very pinnacle of God’s truth and revelation. In fact, I think all of Romans 8 could be called the Himalayan Mountains. When you come to Romans 8:1, it says, “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” That’s a pretty lofty point. Then, you continue climbing higher to get to verse 17 and it talks about how “we’re not only children of God, but we’re heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.” I call that “Mount Glory.” Then in verses 18-27 we descend into the valley of suffering. It talks about how “the whole of creation is groaning”. and then it talks about “how we groan and even the holy spirit groans.” but now we come to prepare to climb up to the very pinnacle, the Mt. Everest of biblical truth. Romans 8:28. You know on some of these climbing expeditions, they have to pause and wait before they can go higher because they have to wait and get acclimated to the lack of oxygen to the thin atmosphere. Well, that’s similar to what we have done in January with Y2K. We’ve paused a little bit to get ready. Now, I want you to join me as we go for the crest, as we go to the top and we discover what God’s pinnacle of revelation is. Some people who climbed Everest find death, but all who climb to the top of Romans 8:28 find life.

Paul writes. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Please don’t close your Bibles because we are going to look at verse 29 later in the service. This is what I call “God’s Infallible Guarantee.” Have you ever bought a product and along with it you receive a guarantee or a warranty that says if anything goes wrong with it, you get your money back? Well this is “God’s Infallible Guarantee!” He says, “I *guarantee* if you meet my conditions that you’re going to see all things become a part of his plan to produce good.” R.A. Torrey said Romans 8:28 is “a soft pillow for tired hearts.” I call it “Gods greatest promise.” Let’s learn four things about God’s promise:

I. CERTAIN “WE KNOW”

God’s promise is certain. He says, “We *know*” There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. It is an ironclad-promise-no-shred-of-doubt-whatsoever! Paul says, “We know that it is certain!” How can you know that Romans 8:28 is true? How can you really know? There are at least two reasons.

1. God’s character

Number one is God's character. This promise is not based upon the whim of human disposition. It is based upon the rock of God's faultless character. God is a good God. There are many scriptures that talk about the goodness of God, but it says, Look at what it says in Psalm 1:45 "The Lord is good," hang on to that word "is good to all. He has compassion on all he has made." Do you remember when you were a little kid one of the first prayers you learned was, "God is great. God is good." That says it all! God is great! And God is good! God is not some mean, vengeful God. He is a loving Father who wants to make your life enjoyable so it is based upon his character. By the way God cannot lie. God has never told a lie nor *can* he lie. Dr. F. B. Meyer was a great Christian writer and he wrote this about the reliability of God's character, "If any promise of God should fail, then the heavens would clothe themselves in sackcloth, the sun, moon and stars would reel from their courses, the universe would rock and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful fact that God can lie!" Praise God that will never happen because God does not lie. He cannot lie. He has never told a lie. The reason we are certain about this truth is because of God's character.

2. Our experience

Our experience is another reason we are certain. Once you experience something, nobody has to prove it to you. Charles Spurgeon said, "Once you have eaten honey, no one has to describe its sweetness to you. You know it from experience." There are those of you in this room who can join me in saying, "Pastor, Romans 8:28 is true. Not only does the Bible say it, but I have found it to be true in my own life." I've told you about the little lady years ago who had the initials TP written in the margins of her Bible. T and P, turn a few pages, T and P, turn a few pages, T and P. Somebody asked her, "What does 'T and P' mean?" She smiled real big and said, "It stands for 'Tried and Proven'." Some of you have written "T and P" in the margin beside Romans 8:28. If you haven't, go ahead and put it there, if you know it to be true. it is "Tried and Proven to be true."

It was true in the life of the apostle Paul. Do you know anything about Paul who wrote Romans under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Paul lived to preach the gospel. He lived to start churches. He lived to disciple Christians but for several years Paul found himself in jail in Rome. and you would have thought Paul would have looked at being in prison and said, "Oh, this is terrible! This is awful!" and he would have moaned and groaned and complained but look at Philippians 1:12, "Now, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened" meaning being put in prison, "has really served to advance the gospel." If you took the time to read the rest of Philippians 1, he said, "Because I am in prison all the prison guards have heard about Jesus" "Because I am in prison everybody who is touched by all these prison guards in Rome they're hearing the gospel!" So Paul was the guy who could always see stars through prison bars. He was the guy who could always see the good in every situation.

Can you do that? I have a preacher friend who every time he signs his name puts Romans 8:28 after it. One day he was in a hotel restaurant eating breakfast and he signed his ticket and walked out into the lobby. The server came running after him shaking the ticket. He said, "Sir, sir! You signed this incorrectly. We don't have a room 828 in this hotel!"

The preacher said, “No. I put the right room number. Look right there.” And my friend said, “That’s not room 828 that’s Romans 8:28.” The server said, “Well, what does that say?” The preacher just happened to have his Bible with him and he whipped it out. He said, “It says, ‘In all things God is working for the good to them that love God and who are called according to his purpose.’” The server said, “Sir. Do you really believe that?” The man said, “Absolutely, I believe that!” He was able to enter into a spiritual conversation with this guy because he signed Romans 8:28 every time he signed his name. Now can you do that?

II. COMPLETE IN ALL THINGS

Do you know from personal experience that it’s true? Well number one God’s promise is certain. Number two God’s promise is complete in its scope. Notice Romans 8:28 says, “For we know in *all*...” A-L-L. Now, if you are looking at the Bible again, I want to misread it. Look at verse 28 “and we know that in most things God works” NO “and we know that in some things God works” That’s not what it says. How about this one? “And we know that in 99.99 percent of things God works for good.” It doesn’t say that. It says, “in *all* things.” When God says “all” do you know what he means? He *means* all. He means 100 percent. It is complete in its scope. Let me show you what it includes. First of all it includes

1. Pleasant experiences = Good

“Pleasant experiences” equal “good.” You say, “Well, now, that’s a no-brainer!” Absolutely! We all know “good things” cause us to be happy and “good things” lead to other “good things.” If you would stop for just a moment and count your blessings, I think everybody in this room would have to admit God has been good to you. You have had a lot of pleasant experiences in your life. Sometimes people get hung up on the deep theological question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” That’s a pretty important question but I’ll tell you what I get hung up on more “Why do good things happen to us bad people?” Because we’re all sinners by nature and by choice and we don’t deserve any of the good things that we have received but we all have received good things and those things of course equal “good.”

2. Painful experiences = Good

Let me move on to the second thing because you don’t have any trouble with that first one. Number two, it also includes “painful experiences.” Painful experiences can equal “good.” This is where we’re going to get deeper in just a moment. You say, “How in the world does that work?” Well, this verse doesn’t say, “We know how God works in all things for those who love God.” It just says, “We know that God works in all things.” You don’t have to figure it out in order to enjoy it. You don’t have to figure out how electricity works to plug your hair dryer in, do you? You just use it. This is the truth of God’s Word. You don’t have to figure out the mechanics of it, just appreciate the benefit of it and it’s true in all the Bible. Let me just give you two quick Bible examples.

a. Example: Joseph

First of all there is Joseph. Do you remember Joseph in the Old Testament? He was a teenager rejected by his own family. His brothers mugged him. They beat him up, threw him down in a pit and when a slave caravan came along, they sold their brother into slavery. He was taken down to Egypt where he became a slave in the home of a man by the name of Potiphar. He was falsely accused of sexual assault. He was put in jail and forgotten. Now, is there anyone in this room who thinks you’ve had it that bad? Joseph overcame all of that and God worked all of those things out. Toward the end of his life this is what Joseph said to the very brothers who assaulted him. “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20) After all of these painful experiences, Joseph looks back on it and says, “You know, God made it good.”

b. Example: David

What about the second example of the Old Testament David? David had a pretty rough life even though he was a man after God’s own heart. Even though he was a king; he committed adultery; he committed murder; he had a lot of family problems. There was incest in his family. There was murder in his family. One of his sons, Absalom, rebelled against David and publicly put him to shame and then David died a tragic death. His life was one heartache after another. Look at what David says as he grows old and he is writing Psalms 1:19. He says, “It was” there’s the word again “It was *good* for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” David said, “Listen, God. I recognize I was so hardheaded that you had to bring affliction and tribulation and pain in my life so I would finally obey you.” Have some of you learned that? Sometimes it is the affliction and problems and pain that drive us to our knees because God always meets us at the point of desperation. The problem with some people is they are not desperate enough yet!

God can take bad things and he can turn them into good. For instance, take this simple chemical formula. You can take sodium (Na) and you can take chlorine (Cl) and each one by itself is a poison. If you consume sodium or you consume chlorine, you will die! but you put those two together, NaCl, and they form sodium chloride which is common table salt. Not only do you sprinkle table salt on your food. it is an absolute essential for life. If you don’t have the right mixture of salt in your body, you will die. Isn’t that just like the Lord to take two things that are poisonous alone and turn them into something that’s good? That’s the way he works. God’s promise is certain number one. God’s promise is complete in *ALL* things.

III. COMPASSIONATE: “GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD”

Number three. God’s promise is compassionate because there is a compassionate God who is the subject of this sentence. When I memorized Romans 8:28 like many of you. I memorized it in the King James Version. Right? The King James says, “For we know that all things work together for good.” I really like the New International translation better because it really captures the subject of the sentence. In the New International version it is not “things” that are working it is God who is working. By the way have you discovered things don’t work most of the time? Sometimes people say, “Well, it will all work out.” They say, “Good luck!” I don’t believe in luck. You’ve heard me say it before. The only luck I believe in is “Living Under Christ’s Knowledge” L-U-C-K. Things don’t just work out. but God does work things for good. How would it be if I said about this organ, “Man, those keys on that organ made some beautiful music

today, didn't they? Those organ pipes sure played some beautiful music today, didn't they?" No. you don't talk about those things, you talk about the person. You talk about the pianist who was making it happen. When things seem to work out, don't talk about things working, talk about God working, because He's the one that works.

1. Everything that happens is not good by itself

There are two important things you need to understand about this promise. First of all not everything that happens is good. Everything that happens is not good by itself. Based on this promise if you go through a divorce, you can't say, "Oh, goody! That was so good!" No. Based upon this promise. If you're diagnosed with cancer, you can't say, "That is so good!" No, because there are bad things that happen. This verse is not saying everything is good. I'm here to tell you divorce is bad. It's painful. I'm here to tell you cancer is bad! Crime, abuse is bad! This verse is not saying they are good. By the way did you know some people are so narrow minded they are still thinking everything that happens is just God's will? You say something bad happens, "Well, it was just God's will." Absolutely, unconditionally, NO! Everything that happens is not God's perfect will.

Let me give you an example. A teenager who is driving his car on a Saturday night and a drunk driver approaches and loses control and there is a head-on collision and the teen is killed by the drunk driver. Some people will say, "I guess it was just God's will." You find me one scripture in the Bible that will stand behind that! You won't find one! I'll tell you what happened. It was not God's will for that to happen. It was the wicked will of the person who chose to drink until he was drunk. Proverbs 19:3 says, "A man's own folly ruins his life yet his heart rages against the Lord." It is not God's perfect, sweet, wonderful, loving will that causes these things to happen. It is the sinful will of men and women who choose to do stupid things. I'm here to tell you everything that happens is not good by itself. But God is such a great God he can take all of these things and even turn those bad things into good. And that's the second part of the equation.

2. Everything that happens is only one part of God's recipe

Everything that happens is only one part of God's recipe. Job in the Old Testament lost his fortune, lost his family and lost his health. He was hurting, yet he had such absolute faith in God this is what he said, "Though God slay me, yet will I hope in him. I will surely defend my ways to his face." Do you know what Job was saying? He was saying it was bad! It's awful! It's terrible! But the very worst that could happen is that I'm going die and if I die, I'm going to go face to face with God and I'll talk to him about it then!

Just this week one of our deacons went to be with Jesus after battling cancer. When I saw James a couple of weeks ago in his home and prayed with him, he said to me. he said, "David, I'm in a win-win situation." He said, "If I live, I'm going to glorify Christ, but if I die, I'm going to see Jesus." He said, "There's no way I can lose." Philippians, 1:21 says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" heads, I win, tails, I win. A Christian cannot lose! Why? Because all of these things that happen. they are just one part of God's recipe.

Let me tell you what I mean. Our Women's Ministry put together a Green Acres Cookbook. If you have your cookbooks this morning, open it with me to page 170. Mary Walters has a cake recipe in there called, "Mother's Pound Cake." Here are the ingredients 1-3/4 cups of sugar. Is there anyone in this room who wants to sit down with 1-3/4 cups of sugar and consume that sugar by itself? Yuck! The next one is 2 sticks of oleo. How would you like to melt down 2 sticks of oleo (margarine) and drink that stuff? That would be terrible! 5 raw eggs. Anybody besides Rocky want to eat raw eggs? 2 cups of flour. Can you imagine how terrible it would be to force 2 cups of dry flour down your throat? 1 teaspoon vanilla. Well I might be able to handle that one. You know what I'm getting at. You can take all of those ingredients by themselves and they're not very appetizing, but you can mix them all together, put it in the oven and what comes out is something delicious. I'm here to tell you. That's the nature and character of our God. He can take these bad experiences by themselves they are very bitter or bad and you put them in the oven of His omnipotence and out pops something the Bible says is for your good and for His glory.

Do you know the greatest example of that? It is the cross of the Lord Jesus. God watched his only son being arrested and God must have thought, "That's not good." God watched as his only son had his back bared and a cat-of-nine tails tore into his back until it was hanging in ribbons of flesh. I'm sure God must have thought, "That's not good." Then he watched as Jesus was blindfolded and they hit him in the face with a stick. I'm sure the Father must have thought, "That's not good." Then they put a crown of thorns on his head. "That's not good." Then they nailed his hands and feet to a cross and lifted it up and for six hours he hung there in shame and nakedness bleeding in agony. And I'm sure the Father must have thought, "That's not good!" But do you know what happened? God took all of those things that were not good and he used them as the platform upon which every one of us can have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life and God said, "Now *that's* good! That's good!" The cross is the greatest proof of Romans 8:28. God's promise is certain we know. God's promise is complete in all things. God's promise is compassionate. It is God that is working. That word working is the word *sunergos*. We get our word *synergism* from that. God's the one that's making it happen.

IV. CONDITIONAL: WHO BENEFITS?

Number four God's promise is conditional. There are some conditions, qualifications, a caveat attached to it. This promise is not for everybody. The guarantee is limited. For instance, if you buy a product and you use it for something it was not made for, then you're not going to get your money back. If you buy a radio and then use it for a boat anchor and then take it back and say, "This thing doesn't work!" You're not going to get your money back. You didn't meet the conditions of the guarantee. This promise is limited in its audience. It is not for everybody. Look at the last half of this verse and it tells us who the audience is. It says, "to those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose." So, there are two brackets: On one side those who love God and on the other side those who are called according to his promise. Anyone outside those brackets cannot claim this promise.

For instance, a man who never gave God any attention, who never prayed, never worshiped God steals a car, robs a bank, and shoots the guard dead. He is arrested, tried and convicted. He is sentenced to die and is on death row. Let's say he picks up a Bible and he reads Romans 8:28.

He says, "Oh, boy! Romans 8:28." Can he claim it? No! He can't claim it. Do you know why? He doesn't love God; he's not called according to God's purpose. You know I used that example intentionally because I know there are thousands of inmates in our Texas prison system that watch the videos of this service. After all, we send more Baptists to prison than any other denomination. You know that, don't you? It's true! But I also want to say this: Any man or woman on death row *regardless* of how bad you have been in your past, *if* you turn from your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ, you can be gloriously saved in an instant and then you can claim Romans 8:28. You say, "Is that truly possible?" Absolutely. The thief who was hanging on the cross turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" and Jesus said, "That's enough faith in me. Today you will be with me in paradise." Some of you are saying, "Oh, pastor. I'm glad you are talking to those inmates." Just hold it just a minute because there may be some self-centered, affluent, materialistic person in this room who only gives God a little token lip service; you honor him with your mouth, but your heart is far from him. God is just one little part of your life and not a very big part. I'm here to tell you, friend. You can't claim that promise either. It's not just those who are down and out who need Jesus; it's those who are up and out who need Jesus too. But I'll also make you the same offer. No matter how bad you've been, no matter how selfish you are right now, wherever you are and whatever you have done you can turn to Christ and then you can claim Romans 8:28.

1. Do you have a passionate love for God?

Who can benefit from this question? Let me ask you two personal questions and if you can answer these questions "yes," you can claim Romans 8:28. Question number one is: Do you have a passionate love for God? That's what it says "those who love God." It's strange. Even people in church talk about their faith in such impersonal terms. You ask them about their relationship with God. Do you know what they say? "I'm a Baptist." That is so impersonal. "I'm a Protestant" or "I'm a Catholic." You ask them about their relationship with God and they say, "Oh, I believe in God." You might believe in lightning too, but you have never been touched by it—hopefully. The Bible talks about the thing God desires and requires of us is a personal relationship. Can you honestly say you have the kind of relationship with God you can just say, "God, I love you! I love you!" You can't love him unless you know him but if you know him, you'll love him. You can't say you love God if you don't love other people. That's the catch! That's the clincher! I John 4 says, "If anyone says I love God yet hates his brother he's a liar, for anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." Question number one: Do you have a passionate love for God? You say, "Well, how can you tell?" Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." If there's any area of your life where you are not willing to obey God, don't say you love him.

2. Do you have a persistent longing to be like Jesus?

Here's question number two: Do you have a persistent longing to be like Jesus? Is it something that consumes you? Can you say like the psalmist, "As the deer pants for the streams of water so my soul pants for you, O God." You say, "Well, now, pastor. I heard what you said about loving God because that's what the verse says, but why did you say something about 'being like Jesus'?" That verse doesn't say that." Look at the last four words of Romans 8:28, "according to his purpose." It's no mistake that Romans 8:29 follows 8:28. Do you want to know what God's

purpose is for your life? Look at Romans 8:29 “For those God foreknew, he also predestined” don’t worry about those words. we’re going to talk about them next week. But here’s the part I want you to see “to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” Do you know what God’s purpose is for my life and for your life? He wants to make us more like Jesus every day in every way. Do you want to be more like Jesus or are you more interested in being who you are being the person you are or do you really want to be more like Jesus? Wouldn’t this be a wonderful church? wouldn’t this be a wonderful world? wouldn’t this be a wonderful community? if everybody said, “God, I want to be more like Jesus every single day! I want to be like Jesus!” If that’s your desire Romans 8:28, is yours to claim.

Let me give you a personal example. In 1970 I was in high school that was 1970 B.C.—before Cindy. I transferred to Andalusia High School in my junior year and later that year, even though I had been in that school for one year, I decided to run for Student Body President. Now that’s a pretty big deal. So I got a campaign committee together and I ran for President of the Student Body. My only opponent was my friend, Tino Ballasteras, who was the son of the long-time Presbyterian preacher there in town. We had a nice, friendly campaign. We were going to vote on Monday morning. On Sunday afternoon before that Monday four of the girls from my church’s youth group who were on my campaign committee were out joyriding on Sunday afternoon. That’s what we used to do when gas was 24.9 cents a gallon remember? They had a wreck. Nobody was injured seriously but they all had to go to the emergency room with a few stitches and bruises and things like that. But none of them felt good enough to go to school on Monday morning so they didn’t vote! Well everybody voted. They counted the votes once; they counted the votes twice and we didn’t understand why, but they counted them a third time and Tino Ballasteras won by two votes. I lost by two votes! I want you to know I was disappointed! Every teenager would be if you put that much emphasis and that much effort into a project. I mean I was disappointed!

That summer, our School Board sent Tino to what’s called “The Summer Youth Conference” and if I had been elected, I would have gone there and I really do think my life would have taken a different track. But, because I wasn’t elected, I went to work at a Baptist Camp that summer. It just so happened at that Baptist Camp in 1970 I was called to preach. It just so happened that I followed the Lord and I started working in churches. I went to a little church in Montgomery and met a girl named Cindy and married her and have had a great family and have followed the Lord as he has led me from church to church and I can honestly tell you today: There is no place on planet Earth that I would rather be right now than pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas. AMEN! You say, “Wait a minute. What happened to old Tino? Is he in prison?” No. It’s kind of funny. Tino is one of the assistant pastors to Robert Schuller at Crystal Cathedral in southern California. I can’t stand Southern California, so I am glad I didn’t get elected. I can look back on that disappointing experience and can say, “Lord, I know you didn’t cause that wreck and I know you didn’t cause me to lose that election but God, I just want to thank you that even though that was something that was very painful to me as a teenager, it’s turned out to be something that is wonderful!”

CONCLUSION

The little kid was picking a new puppy and he looked down there in the box and of all the puppies there was one little puppy who was wagging his tail furiously. The little boy said, "Oh, Daddy. I want the one with the happy ending." I assure you, if you love God and if you are called according to his promise, you can claim Romans 8:28 and I assure you. you'll always have a happy ending.

OUTLINE

God’s Promise Is:

I. CERTAIN “WE KNOW”

1. God’s character

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. *Psalm 145:9*

2. Our experience

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. *Philippians 1:12*

II. COMPLETE IN ALL THINGS

1. Pleasant experiences = Good

2. Painful experiences = Good

Examples:

a. Joseph

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” *Genesis 50:20*

b. David

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. *Psalm 119:71*

III. COMPASSIONATE: “GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD”

Everything that happens is:

1. Not good by itself

2. Only one part of God’s recipe

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. *Job 13:15*

IV. CONDITIONAL: WHO BENEFITS?

Do you have a

1. Passionate love for God?

If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. *1 John 4:20*

2. Persistent longing to be like Jesus?

As the deer pants for streams water, so my soul pants for you, O God. *Romans 8:29*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes