

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Trinity 10 Sunday Sermon on 2017-10-22

Does Everything Turn Out For The Good?

by Fr Reed K. Merino

How many times have you heard someone say things like, "Everything will turn out OK", or "God has a good purpose in everything that happens?" Or, when one is waiting for a job: "If it's meant to be, it will happen." Or, at a funeral after much suffering: "God's ways are mysterious, but there is a good purpose behind everything."

Wanting to provide comfort to people who are grieving or afraid is a natural and commendable instinct. But surely we are to be limited by the truth: if you tell a friend whose child just died that the child appeared to you last night and spoke about how wonderful their new life was, that would provide MUCH comfort and cheer. But should you say that when it never happened?

It turns out that such statements are more influenced by Greek mythology than by the revealed Word of God. Greek theology was so fatalistic that even the GOD's were subject to the decrees of what they called the "Fates."

This morning we are going to investigate what GOD has said about such sentiments. So, let's go to the Scriptures:

- Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose."

For some, this may seem to be agreeing with the idea that everything works out in the end, but we should always pay VERY close attention to every word that is being said. Paul added a very important qualifier that describes who it is for whom all things work together for good: "all things work together for good **to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**"

The promise ONLY applies to those who have a heart attitude of love toward God, and who have responded to His "call." [That is reminiscent of what Paul wrote to the Romans: "... Moreover whom He predestined, these He also CALLED"]. The God who searches the heart says that this promise does not extend to someone

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who is merely a church-going nice guy. The promise is for those who are in the specific covenant relationship that Jesus created.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the only relationship that God created as being acceptable to Him is described as a "covenant". In the time of the Old Testament, you could not call yourself a Jew merely because you believed that there was only one God and that you spoke Hebrew. He had created a specific covenant with numerous specific teachings and specific practices that were to be lived out within a specific nation: the nation of Israel. That covenant relationship included things like circumcision, sin offerings, and keeping feasts, as well as heart attitudes:

- Exodus 19:5 "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine."
- Deuteronomy 6:5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength".
- Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."
- Psalm 50:5 "Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."
- Psalm 103:17 "But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, 18 To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them."
- Amos 3:2 "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities."

From these passages you can see several things:

- First, you see that surrendering to God was not a VAGUE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT, such as "I believe in God." Surrendering to God and acceptance by God required embracing a covenant that had been created by GOD, not by men. It was a covenant full of specific beliefs, commands, attitudes and procedures.

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- Secondly, you see that this covenant required joining and functioning within a SPECIFIC COMMUNITY, called "Israel." A Syrian could not enter into God's covenant all by himself just by believing and practicing what the Jews believed and practiced.
- Third, we see that the promises in that God-created covenant were CONDITIONAL: they required that you be diligent to obey all that was part of the covenant, and that your diligence proceed from a heart attitude of love. If you were NOT diligent to obey His revelation, you fell under the curses connected with the covenant. (Amos 3:2, above)

The coming of the Son of God brought a NEW covenant into being, different and better than the old covenant ("He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." - Hebrews 7:22)

But the promises of the NEW covenant also only apply to those who are actually walking in the same qualifiers that I mentioned for the OLD covenant: that you be walking diligently within the details of that better covenant, and that you be doing it with the same heart attitude: "loving God." It is true that Jesus said that all the law and prophets hang on loving God and your neighbor. But that doesn't at all mean that there was nothing to the New Covenant salvation but those two; He said that all the details are all DERIVED from those two heart attitudes.

Already we are seeing the fallacy in those vague assurances I mentioned in the beginning. They are false because we have no authority from GOD to say such things.

But there is one more "player" in this question about who causes what to happen. We must think about the role that Satan plays among men.

Both Jesus and His apostles acknowledge that it is SATAN who is the functional ruler of the people of this world:

- John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out."
- John 14:30 "I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me,..."
- Revelation 13:2 "Now the beast that I saw was like a leopard, but its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave the beast his power, his throne, and great authority to rule."

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- Revelation 13:7 "The beast was permitted to go to war against the saints and conquer them. He was given ruling authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation,..."

This tells us that God is being given "credit" for MANY things that He has had nothing to do with.

I see three different "treatment plans" that God has for humans:

- If you are not elect of God: no Romans 8 promise of God applies to you; (i.e., "all things work together for good..."). You are the victim of chance and of Satan (as he chooses to pay attention to you).
- If you are both elect and have surrendered to His "call": YES, for Romans 8!
- If you are elect but not yet surrendered: God works to protect you from being totally controlled by Satan, but you have no RIGHT yet to claim His promises that were given to His children. Until you accept HIS covenant, you are still victim of Satan's poisonous influences. (Special study of God's election is required)

OTHER PROMISES that we can count on – IF we come to Christ on HIS terms:

- Philippians 1:6 "He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;"
- Philippians 2:13 "...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."
- 1 Corinthians 1:8 "who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."