



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 442

Romans 8:28 “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.”

The magical verse to use for comfort! The spiritual pill that solves all problems! Of course, I'm **NOT** being serious, but it sure seems that way. I have stood along side grieving parents whose son lies in a casket and have overheard folks saying this verse to them. Are you serious? Are we to think that this moment is good or that good can come from a teenage son who died without knowing the Lord?

This magically verse has been used to offer comfort to a women with little children whose husbands have left them for someone else.

It seems that folks use this verse for all situations as a “happily ever after” truth. No matter how bad the circumstances, you'll see good again because of Romans 8.

There are two major thoughts here that some seem to forget.

First, this verse isn't a one-size-fits-all passage. Paul is directing this to “those who love God” and “have been called.” That's not everyone—wish it was. This doesn't fit the guy down the street whose house burned down, who never darkens a church building, has a foul mouth, and believes not in God but in aliens. Giving this verse to such a person doesn't help nor is it according to the will of God. This is addressed to those walking with the Lord.

Secondly, the good of this passage is not necessarily my personal good, but God's good. God causes things to work together for good...later, according to His purpose. It might be good that I suffer, if that brings others to Christ. God's good is the kingdom, righteousness, hope, truth and Heaven. That's what God is after. If it takes dark valleys to accomplish that, so be it. But

using this verse to assure that fortunes will be restored, love will be found, jobs will be secured is not the right direction. The good is God's good.

Acts 13 tells us that David served the purpose of God in his generation. David's life included giants, wars, rebellion, turmoil and periods of peace. The purpose of God is the good that Paul is addressing. God moves things, God moves people, to fulfill His purpose. THY will be done is absolute.

Within my life, things happen. God does things. As I walk with the Lord, He will use me and you as His instruments to accomplish His will. The dying Christ on the cross illustrates this. Personally, for Jesus, dying wasn't a good thing. It came after intense suffering and pain. But for the cause of Christ, for "the good," it had to be done. It was worth it.

The prodigal going to the pig pen was a good thing to get him to wake up and come home. The goal of God is that we walk with Him. He will do things to fulfill that purpose. It is marvelous to know that God moves things to help us complete His purpose. We are active in our lives and are doing things that we do not understand.

Later in this very Roman chapter Paul would say, "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine or nakedness or peril or sword" will not separate us for the love of God. That list isn't a "nice" list. I wouldn't want to choose any of those. They all involve suffering, shame and pain. Will those all turn into "good" things? Not as some use our passage, but they can lead to the fulfilling and accomplishing of God's will.

It is hard for us to realize that life is not about us. We are not the center of the universe. God's way is greater than us, including our personal joy and happiness. If all we seek is to be happy, we live like the world, jumping from relationship to relationship, chasing fads, pretty on the outside and hollow on the inside. God has a plan—for each one of us. Smiles on our faces isn't it. Getting to live selfish lives where we do anything we want, isn't it. It's righteousness, holiness, and following Him. If God must break us to get us there, that is good. If we have to be slapped into reality, that is good. If we lose all, but save our souls, that's good.

This is a powerful verse, if used correctly. It is dangerous if misused. We must be able to pray, "Thy will be done..." and live accordingly.

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