

Faith - Christian's Radar

#0009

Study given by W.D. Frazee - February 10, 1979

Several years ago when I was a young fellow, I was a student at Loma Linda. About the time that I came there, there was another young man that had come to take the nurse's course there at Loma Linda and he and I became fast friends and we used to have prayer bands together. We would go off to the hills nearby Loma Linda there and take a walk together. Out there on the hills we'd have our prayer bands. So we had a good time together.

Some time went by and he got discouraged about something and without telling anybody about what he was going to do, off he went. He left Loma Linda entirely; he left his nurse's course and joined the Army. He had been in the Army before he had become an Adventist. So he joined the Army and after some months I got a letter from him. I hadn't known where he was. Nobody knew where he was. He was up in San Francisco, in the Presidio, which is an Army post, and there he was in the Army. And so, of course he had to serve out his enlistment because even though he felt a bit bad that he had run off the way he did, there he was caught in that.

Presently his brother came to see him. Now his brother was a man who was an infidel. He didn't believe in God at all. But his brother and he, they hadn't seen each other for several years, but my friend talked with him and studied with him but he still wasn't interested in the Bible. But about this time Elder John Tyndall, who was an evangelist, came to San Francisco, and a little later he got me to join him there as a young helper.

One of the first things that Elder Tyndall did was to start in the church, there in San Francisco, a series of Sunday night meetings in which he told his life story from being an infidel to becoming a Christian. And this brother of my friend attended the meetings. And he accepted Christ, accepted the message, and finally became a missionary working in Mexico for many years winning dozens and scores of people to Christ.

Now my question: Was it a good thing that my friend got discouraged and left his training in Loma Linda and left the church and joined the Army? That was the way, you see, that his brother came to San Francisco. Otherwise his brother never would have come. Was it a good thing that he did that? No. Did something good work out of it? Yes. You're ready for the text now, aren't you?

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” Romans 8:28.

What are the first three words? “And we *know*.” Not guess, or think, or hope, or believe, but we know. And what is the fifth word? All.

All things are not good, but all things do what? Work together *for* good. But that’s not the end of the verse. They work together for good to whom? Them that love God. Them that love God.

God would like to work all things together for good for everybody. That’s His purpose. That’s His desire. But He has given men choice, and whenever you give people choice they have to live with the consequences of that choice otherwise there is no choice. No choice at all. If God gives me a choice and then when I make the wrong choice He steps in and keeps me from carrying out my wrong choice, then I don’t have any choice, do I? No.

And so for 6,000 years God has been letting the people on this planet demonstrate the results of choices. And yet, here is the amazing thing: in and through all that, He still makes those choices that human beings make. He makes them work together for good to His children. He makes them work together for good for His children.

God is not indebted to wrong things. He has various ways of doing things. But God has chosen to show forth His wisdom and His love by making even the wrong choices of people work out. You see, my friend got discouraged and went off and didn’t tell anybody where he was going and joined the Army. Later his brother came and saw him and heard the message and accepted it. All that is wonderful the way it worked out.

But that doesn’t mean that that’s the only way God could have done it. God has a thousand ways, we are told, of providing for us of which we know nothing. (See *Ministry of Healing*, page 481.) God likes to use good things to work out good. But do you know why God uses even the bad things to work out good? There are several reasons. One reason is this – He wants to demonstrate the fact of His foreknowledge. He looks ahead. He sees the choices that men are going to make, and He arranges to use those to His glory.

Another reason is this, and this is perhaps the most important reason. He doesn’t want people to get discouraged. Did you ever make a wrong choice? Well, if we’ve ever sinned we’ve made a wrong choice because sin is always the wrong choice. The Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23. Now if God could never work anything good out of a wrong choice then we would all be forever hopeless. Forever hopeless.

But we can have the assurance that if we are willing, God can take even our failures, our mistakes and work good out of them. Not that they are good. We still have to reap consequences, but those things can teach us precious lessons and can work out good. And thereby we are saved from being utterly discouraged.

The Bible is full of stories of this kind. In fact, the whole plan of salvation is God’s exhibition of His ability to take bad things and work out good. You take when Adam and Eve sinned, that was the first mistake in this world, the first failure. Did

God cast them off? No. Did they have to reap the sad consequences? Oh yes. Did they have to leave their garden home? Yes. Did they have to go out where the thorns and the briars would stick them and hurt them? Yes. Did they have to work hard for a living until they actually sweat in the endeavor to get a living from the soil? Yes.

Did they have to endure many other sorrows? Did they see the leaves fall? The flowers fade? And my what a tragedy that was when they saw Abel, their darling son, cold in death, and they recognized that it was because of *their* sin that any sin and death had come in this world. All those were bitter experiences due to their failure.

And yet God was in all these things encouraging them. He brought in the sacrificial system whereby they could bring a lamb and confess their sins and ask God to forgive them and He would. And He even worked out good from their failures because it taught them to hate sin and to be sorry for transgression and they will be in the kingdom of God saved, never to sin again. They learned through sad experience the painful results of transgression.

And so it worked out good in their lives, didn't it? Poor Cain, he didn't *let* God work it out for good in his life. He gave himself up to sin, killed his brother, went off and started a city that was a center of sin and law-breaking and rebellion, and became the leader of a race of rebels against God. He didn't work out good for him. He didn't let it. He refused to cooperate with God.

Let me state it this way. No matter how bad the failure I've made, if I will be willing, God can work some good out for me. No matter how little the failure I've made, if I refuse to come back to God, refuse to learn my lesson, it will eventually bring great sorrow both in earth and in heaven, both in this life and in the life to come.

I want to read a very interesting statement here from an experience that came to the servant of the Lord back in 1890. That year, Sister White was invited to New York City to hold some meetings. And we see her there in the Fall of the year holding meetings in New York City.

This is from her diary, which she wrote on a Monday morning.

"Brooklyn, New York, Monday, November 24, 1890

I rise this morning with gratitude in my heart for a precious night's rest. The cars on the elevated railroad have been thundering past all night, but I have slept excellently well. I did not fill my appointment at the hall yesterday evening at five o'clock. The managers of the building let it to other parties when our people had engaged it for the day. But we could not help ourselves, as there was no written contract. This ought always to be secured. We must be more thorough in our business management. Many had purposed to come with their unbelieving relatives, and this was a great

disappointment to them. They wept with sorrow. This disappointment we must reckon among the “all things” that shall work together for good to those that love God” *Manuscript Release*, Number 1033, pages 30-31.

Now let’s take that last line first. Here they were. They were planning on having a meeting in this hall on Sunday afternoon at five o’clock. They had rented it, agreed, but they had no written contract. Apparently they had been holding meetings at various times. And the management rented it to some other people for that day. And so since they had no contract they couldn’t hold a meeting.

They were sorry about it. Some of them wept. They weren’t able to come and hear the message of God. That sounds like a bad thing. Well, it was. But the prophet said that it was to be reckoned among the all things that would do what? Work together for good to those that love God. Did they love God? Yes. Well how could that work good for them? Can any of you think of some good that could work out of that? It is suggested already in what I have read. Did any of you notice it? They needed to be more careful the next time. Careful to do what? To have a written contract. Do business things in a business-like way.

Somebody might say, “Oh well, God will take care of them.” He took care of them. He let them miss the meeting in order to teach them a what? A lesson. But He didn’t forsake them. He was with them and the prophet said this will work together for good. And one of the ways in which it will work together for good is to teach us to be sure to have business things done in a business-like way with a written contract.

I think this is a wonderful example of how God teaches us lessons, and yet, He does not forsake us. He doesn’t forsake us at all.

In *Welfare Ministry*, page 152, is this interesting statement:

“Do you make mistakes? Do not let this discourage you. The Lord may permit you to make small mistakes in order to save you from making larger mistakes. Go to Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you, and then believe that He does” *Welfare Ministry*, page 152.

Isn’t that wonderful? You see, we are in a school, dear friends, and in school the most important thing is not to never make a mistake: it’s to learn something from every mistake. I remember when I was in the third grade. We were to have a special examination. And this man who was examining me orally, he asked me some questions. I don’t remember any of them that he asked me except for just one question. Do you know why I remember that one? I gave the wrong answer. But that was the last time I gave the wrong answer to that one.

He was drilling me on the multiplication tables. And when he asked me what 7 times 12 was, I said 82. Well, you know that wasn’t right. I knew pretty soon that it was 84 and it has been 84 ever since.

Now I made a mistake but I learned something from it. Do you see what I mean? That was the little thing, but all through life, dear friends, God is teaching us.

Somebody says, "Don't you think God would be pleased if we never made a mistake?" Sure. That's His goal. But remember He had given us a mind, a brain, and a choice. He's not running us like a man runs an automobile that he's a hold of the wheel and his foot is on the gas or the brake, and he just takes over and we go along and we have nothing to say about it. Oh, no. No.

God is developing our mind, our intelligence, our memory, our reason, our judgment, conscience; all of these things are being developed. And they are developed as we use them. And in the process we sometimes make mistakes. I'm not talking now about rebellious, deliberate sin. I am talking about the mistakes that come like misspelling a word, or giving the wrong answer, or using the wrong judgment about any subject. All of these mistakes. And they can be in spiritual things as well as in physical things.

Do you suppose a man might give a wrong answer about a Bible question? Well, if He's a Christian, why wouldn't God inspire him and keep him from doing that? Because God is in the business of running a school. Do you know that one of the best ways of getting rid of an error, an erroneous idea in your mind is to ventilate it where somebody can correct you if you are willing to listen?

In my classes I sometimes tell students, "If anybody here has the wrong answer, I hope he will give it." Of course, he should be willing to change his mind, shouldn't he? Yes. With light from the Bible – the Inspired Word of God.

My point is: God is working all these things together for good. And He arranges (watch this) that if He sees that we have a tendency in our mind to make a certain mistake, He will let us make that mistake in a matter that is as small as possible in order for us to learn the lesson. As I have sometimes put it, "He keeps the tuition as cheap as possible." Oh I thank Him that He has done that for me, dear friends. He's taught me lessons through my own carelessness, through my own failures, but He's kept the tuition as cheap as possible.

But the tuition wasn't *nothing*, friends. He didn't say, "Oh well, I love him and so I'll keep him from suffering." Suffering teaches us precious lessons, dear friends. We learn from the things we suffer. You know that don't you? We learn from the things we suffer.

"Reverses will teach caution. We learn by the things we suffer. Thus we gain experience" *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 7, page 278.

Someone has said that good judgment comes from experience, and experience, that comes from exercising poor judgment. And it does, it should, if we are willing to learn. And so all things are working together for good to those that love God. I'm glad that both things are so. God has given me choice, and yet He's ruling and overruling. Aren't you glad for both of those things, dear friends?

Now, let me tell you one of the hardest lessons to learn in all this. It's when we go into a trial and can see no purpose in it whatsoever. We can't even see what lesson to learn out of it. Now if I put my finger on this hot stove and I get burned and pull my hand away, of course as fast as I can, I can at least say, "Well, I can learn out of that to be more careful next time." I can learn that, can't I?

But there are trials that we come into, friends, and we have no idea what made the trial and what it's all about. Did you ever get into a trial like that? You see, if I put my finger on the stove I can at least blame myself. There are trials that I get into that I might blame somebody else for.

But there are some things that come along, friends, and there's no way to blame anybody for them, there are things that happen that the insurance companies call them 'acts of God': like an earthquake or like some terrible storm, or something. They're not things that we have any control over. And yet they may do all kinds of damage to us or to our dear ones, and we say, "How could that work together for good?"

Now, I want to read you an interesting sentence from a letter that the prophet of God wrote to her son who was laboring here in the south in 1895. He was having many trials. He was down in Mississippi. He was trying to carry on a work for some of the poor people down there and he was having many trials, many afflictions. Notice what the prophet wrote to him.

"Keep the trusting spirit of a little child. Though you cannot understand the meaning of many trials, though God does not explain them all to you because to explain them would be to destroy the object of them, to purify and ennoble the heart, yet let simple faith be called forth in the thus saith the Lord for you must have perfect trust."

Now here he was in these problems and trials. He gets a letter from his mother the prophet and she says, "Edson, I saw that you were in trial. Listen, you are to keep the trusting spirit of a little child. You do not understand the meaning of these trials and God does not explain them to you because [watch it] to explain them would be to destroy the purpose of them. It's to teach you faith and perfect trust in God."

And so you are to keep that trusting spirit of a little child and say, "Dear Lord, I do not understand this trial. I do not see how it is going to work any good for me, but I believe just because you say so." Do you see? This is one of the greatest uses of this wonderful text which is our scripture this morning.

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

How many things are working together for good? *All* things. To whom? Those that love God. Do I love God? Well, that's my privilege to decide whether I love Him or not. I can choose to love Him or I can choose to not love Him, can't I?

Thank God. This is not talking about some sentimental feeling. It's talking about a free choice of a free decision that God has given man. If I put that decision on God's side then I know that my heavenly Father is working all things together for me for my good whether it is an earthquake, a tidal wave, lightning striking, or whatever the trial or problem caused by men or devils, God is taking those things and working them together for my good. I think that is wonderful! Don't you?

One of the greatest promises that I know of is Jesus' statement to Peter,

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." John 13:7.

You don't know now, Peter.

"Oh, but tell me now."

No, no. Can't tell you now.

"Oh, but I want to know now."

No. You can't know now.

"Oh, but I have got to know now."

No. Not now. Not now. But you will know hereafter. Isn't that wonderful, friends? But what about the in-between time? I don't know now but I will know hereafter. Until God's hereafter comes, what will I have to do? Trust. Trust. That's faith. Faith is the Christian's radar. It operates in the fog or in the dark. You don't use radar on a clear day when you can see the mountains. But in the dark or in the fog the radar shows us the mountains, or an airplane coming, or whatever.

Faith is the Christian's radar, and faith says, Here is this trial that has come. I do not see the reason for it. I do not understand its purpose, but I believe there is a purpose and I believe God is working it all together for my good.

In *Ministry of Healing*, page 474, is this tremendous promise.

"In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings" *Ministry of Healing*, page 474.

You know when Joseph was falsely accused by his brothers and they wanted to kill him, but finally decided instead to sell him as a slave. And he was down there in Egypt for ten years as a slave in Potiphar's house. Many a time he must have felt lonesome. There was nobody to encourage him. There was nobody to cheer him. No word from home. He was cut off from everybody. Probably nobody here this morning has ever been for ten years isolated from everybody you know and love. If there is somebody like that you can imagine how Joseph felt.

Then what happened? Why, he was falsely accused again and this time thrown into prison. And for three years, under an unjust accusation he was there a prisoner in the dungeon. Has anybody ever treated you like that? Well if they have you can know how Joseph felt. But if you haven't had that experience just try to imagine what it must have meant for Joseph to go through that. And the point is – he didn't know how long it was going to last. When he had been in prison a year, something came up that looked like he was going to get out. But time went on, you remember, and he didn't get out. The days lengthened into weeks and months and years, and finally, all of a sudden the liberty came, the freedom, and he was brought up to be next to the king and administer the affairs of that great empire in the greatest food conservation program of ancient time.

God's time had come to reveal to Joseph the meaning of all those trials. Your time may come in this life; it may not come until Jesus' advent. Where and whenever it comes, friends, it will be a wonderful unveiling – a wonderful revelation. In the meantime, you and I learn to live by what? Faith. And remember, that doesn't mean that we're not to examine our lives; we're to learn every lesson we can.

Some of our trials are of our own devising, some of our problems come from things that we've done that were mistakes. We are to learn all we can. But after we've learned *all* we can, we're still to trust our Lord that whether the trial is of our own creating, or the devices of others, or the works of the devil, or simply the affairs of nature, whatever the cause of the trial, God is working it all together for whose good? For *my* good, if I love Him. If I love Him.

He's teaching me to be more careful, He's teaching me to be more wise, and when I can't learn any other lesson out of it, what lesson can I learn? To be trustful. To be trustful. To put my hand in my Father's hand and go with Him.

Some of you've heard me tell about the little boy in Chicago who was with his father walking down the sidewalk in the loop, the big business section of Chicago. And the father thought he'd test the little fellow. He said, "Sonny, where are we going?"

The boy looked up and said, "Daddy, I don't know, but you do."

That's it. That's it. There are some things in my life, dear friends, that I have to be with God just like that. There are some things that right now I have to say to the Lord, "Lord, You know where I am going but I don't." But that's alright. It's better for Him to know and me not know, than for me to know and Him to not know. Is that right? That's right.

Alright. Now let's repeat our text again together:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" Romans 8:28.

Do you know that? My friend, if you know that you are a happy man, a happy woman. A happy boy, a happy girl. To have your hand in your Father's hand and

know that He's running this whole universe for your benefit, *that* brings joy and peace not obtained through circumstances surrounding us, but from a Father's love Who is over all. Jesus had this confidence in His earth life. He came down here and took our humanity, lived the life that we must live, lived it with the resources that are available to us, and when it meant that following His Father's will led Him to Gethsemane and the cross, He said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Did it work together for good? Oh yes. For His good? Yes. Isaiah says,

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied"
Isaiah 53:11.

Christ loved you and me so much that He would rather die even if it meant forever and see us saved than live on without us and have us lost. And so His greatest trials, His deepest sacrifice, all these have worked out good for us, good for Him, good for the universe. He'll do it for every one of us.

How many of us would like to send Him the word this morning, "Thank You."

Our heavenly Father, accept the offering of our praise and gratitude and send us out to share with others the good news of Thy love, through Jesus. Amen.

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