

Does it mean that all my problems will have satisfactory solutions, that God will make all things work out toward pleasant, desirable outcomes? Does it mean that all the stories in my life will have happy endings? Are these the "good things" that God promises to bring out of the "all things"?

It would appear that the "good" in this promise must be related to God's primary purpose for our lives as believers, which is to transform us into the likeness of Christ. Whatever will help achieve that primary purpose is "good" in the sense of this promise.

And what will help to form our character into greater Christlikeness?

What are some of the things that God uses to bring about greater conformity to Christ, things which are therefore "good" in the sense of Romans 8:28.

- (1) Whatever will cause us to feel our deep need for and total dependence on God is "good."
- (2) Whatever will encourage and better enable us to do the will of God is "good."
- (3) Whatever will make us greater partakers of His holiness is "good."
- (4) Whatever will make us more humble, consecrated, and fruitful Christians is "good."
- (5) Whatever will teach us lessons we could not learn in any other way is "good."

(These are of course general categories; specific things will be explored when we consider the uses of suffering God makes in the lives of believers.)

These things help to achieve God's primary purpose in our lives, and therefore represent the kinds of "good things" that God is working to produce in us.

If the average person were asked to draw up a list of the kinds of "good things" he or she would like God to work out for them, we might get something like the following:

- (1) Whatever will make me feel good is "good."
- (2) Whatever will solve my problems is "good."
- (3) Whatever will bring in more money is "good."
- (4) Whatever will make me well is "good."
- (5) Whatever will make me more admired, more popular, more attractive is "good."
- (6) Whatever will make it easier to get through life is "good."

Now it is true that these things seem good in the sense of pleasant and desirable. And sometimes God is pleased to allow us to enjoy some of these things we naturally consider "good." But the question is, What does