



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Romans 8: 28

Romans 8

“Frowning Providence”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] If you have your bibles open to Romans 8:28, it is a verse that's translated differently in different versions and we'll comment on that during our study. It reads, 'and we know that God causes all things to work together for good, for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.' May the Lord bless this reading of his word and our study together in it. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, that is a great text of scripture that you have given us, a great truth, a great comfort and one that brings forth from your people words of great praise and words of great Thanksgiving, that the life is difficult and hard and very confusing to us at times and to all of us at times. We can lay hold of that great truth, that you are in control, you are working all things together for good, for us. We praise you as the sovereign God, you are not only a God who is sovereign, who is all powerful, but you are all wise and all merciful and all loving. You do not rule this universe with brute force, but with great wisdom and care and we, your people are at the center of your care, by your grace and we thank you for that and pray, Lord, that as we consider this great text of scripture, which is worthy of 1,000 sermons and of which no one is worthy to preach or can do it justice, nevertheless, Father, we pray that the spirit of God who helps us pray correctly will teach us and open our minds to the truth and enable us to understand things far beyond anything that will be said this morning and we'll take the great text that we will look at and apply it in a myriad of ways with every individual here. Bless us, encourage us, build us up in the faith through our time of study.

We pray for ourselves spiritually this morning, Lord, we pray you bless us and teach us and we pray for ourselves materially as well. We are a people who are dependent upon you for all of the physical aspects of life. We breathe, we live, we move within you, you keep us alive from one moment to the next, you have charted out our course and you are faithfully preserving us and directing us. So Father, help us to understand that and be thankful. That is true for every individual in this world but the vast majority, Father, do not understand that and are not thankful. Make us thankful people, help us to know you better, to appreciate what you have done, what you are doing, what you will yet do for us as believers in Jesus Christ. So bless us materially, Lord, we pray for the sick, we pray that you give them healing if that be your will. We pray for your will to be done in their lives and we know, Father, that your will certainly is that they'd be encouraged in the midst of affliction and we pray for that but we pray, Lord, that you would heal those who have prayed for healing. We pray for protection, we pray for grace, we pray that you would make us lights in the midst of a dark world.

Bless our nation, Lord, as we are in the midst of military conflict. We pray that you give wisdom to our leaders and protect our troops abroad and we pray to a speedy and just conclusion to this war. Bless us as we return to this place this evening, Father, to remember our savior, your son, what he has done for us at Calvary and remember that he's coming again. The day is approaching when his feet will touch the mount of olives and he will bring his reward and his kingdom to this world. May we live for that and may that come soon, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

A few years ago I was in the Atlanta Airport and passed a man who had missed his connection was frantically talking to an agent and not getting the help he wanted he yelled, 'who is control here?' That's a question that lots of people have asked for a long time. One was an English skeptic, William Ernest Henley and he answered that question in his poem, 'Invictus' with its famous line, 'I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.' Brave sounding words, but his life proved the opposite. He was a sickly boy, he lost his leg at 16, he lost his father at 18 and he lost his daughter when she was 5. That's not being in control, that's not being the master of one's fate. Life is too big and unpredictable for any creature to be the captain of it. Now that doesn't mean that there is not a captain, there certainly is, the Lord God.

He is the absolute master and in Romans 8:28, Paul describes him as the one who is in complete control here. He causes all things to work together for good.

That's our text this morning and one of the best known verses in the bible, it is the verse that we look to in time of trouble, when a five year old daughter dies. It has been likened to a pillow on which to rest our weary heads. It follows the groanings of the previous verses where Paul has spoken of the sufferings of this present time. They seem to be inconsistent with who we are as God's sons. Why is it that God's children suffer in this present time? That's the question that Paul is dealing with here and yet Paul explains that those sufferings, those affliction are not, in fact, inconsistent with who we are because our afflictions are real blessings. Paul states that with great confidence. He begins, 'and we know.' There are a lot of things that we do not know, a secret things belong to the Lord. In verse 26, Paul stated that we do not know how to pray as we should. Often we don't know what to ask God to do. We don't know the details of his will for us and how he is working in our lives but we do know that he is. We know that he has a plan and we know that he causes all things to work together for good.

Now, that's the translation of the New American Standard Bible that I'm using. Some of you have the King James version which is translated, 'all things work together for good.' Grammatically, all things can be either the subject or the object of the verb 'work together.' Old manuscripts support both readings. In the oldest of the manuscripts, all things is the object and God is explicitly stated to be the subject and that is construction that fits very well with the context because in the next verses we read that God is the one who is doing the things that Paul describes. He is the one who foreknew us, he is the one who has predestined us, so that fits the context but while the oldest manuscript supports God being the one who works all things in most of the other old manuscripts, the ancient texts, have all things as the subject as the King James version translates it.

Now, that is an acceptable translation. I say it's grammatically acceptable and it's theologically acceptable if we understand that the 'all things work together for good' because God is sovereignly in control causing and guiding them to do just that. The world is not ruled by chance. Things don't just work themselves together for good. The only way that can happen

is by the plan and direction of a God who is absolutely sovereign. So however we translate the verse and as I say, both translations are valid, that is Paul's meaning here. God causes all things to work together for good. That's the main clause of the verse, that's the main statement, the two supporting statements are to those who love God to those who are called according to his purpose. Both these statements make it clear that this promise of good coming from every event is not a promise for everyone. Paul is not writing to the general public here. He is not expressing the kind of optimism that we hear in statements like, 'in the end everything will turn out all right.' For one thing, that kind of confidence is just false. Things don't just turn out all right for lots of people, they turn out bad, but also Paul's very clear about who this promise is given to.

God's work is for his people. He is working for the good of them. This promise is for Christians. It is given to those who love God, which also means those who love his son. Jesus made that very clear in John 10:30, when he said, 'I and the Father are one.' It doesn't mean simply of one purpose, he means of one essence and so the two cannot be separated. To know the one is to know the other, to love the one is to love the other. To love the father is to love the son and to love the spirit, the triune God and Paul is saying that God's providence works favorably for them that do, for those who love God. That is how his providence works in this world for us, God's people. Now when we refer to the providence of God, we mean God's active involvement in all things, from his creation of everything to his preservation of his creation, to his all wise and powerful direction of all things to their appointed end.

Unlike the 18th century deist, who believe that God created the world, then wound it up like some great clock, stepped back from it all and let it run itself and work all things together according to natural law. The Christian believes that God is absolutely involved in everything. We are theists and we believe as theists, as the bible teaches that God has not only created all things, he sustains all things and he directs all things according to his perfect and all-wise plan and that applies to every detail of life. The idea, then that God is managing the world for our good and that every event in our lives contributes to that good is certainly a staggering thought. That's what Paul says and he says it with great confidence. We know that God does this but do we really know that? Do we really believe that?

James Boyce asks that question in his commentary and said when we have a steady job, when our family, our friends are in good health, then, of course, it's easy to say all things work together for good but when things change, when things are very different and they are not so pleasant and not so orderly, when there's a big of chaos in our lives, can parents know that? Can they know that when their child, their son or their daughter in rebellion leaves home and goes out into the world to sow some wild oats that everything is working together for good? Do they believe that then? What about when we become seriously ill? When we lose our health or we lose our job or we lose our savings and our retirement and life becomes very difficult? When we come on our hard times, do we know that this verse is true? Do we know that it is all working together for good when we are afflicted and when we are persecuted or when friends are afflicted or even killed?

None of those things is good, those are evil things, those are tragedies, so what does Paul mean by this statement? What is the scope of the all things? Does everything really work in our favor? Is that what Paul is saying? That's a fair question and from the context, it is clear that he is, in fact, saying that. That even hardship and particularly in this context, the context of our passage, that is what he is referring to. Hardship is working for our good. Paul has been teaching on the sufferings of the present time or on disappointments, on bad things that make us groan within ourselves. These are included in the all things. The good things are certainly included, the pleasant things are certainly included, but the bad things, the unpleasant things, they, as well, are included so that even the negative things of life have a positive purpose in fulfilling God's plan for us, which is our good.

Paul doesn't explain what he means by the good but it's certainly not what we normally think of as good, which is material wealth and physical well-being. He said in verse 17 that we are fellow heirs with Christ, if, indeed, we suffer with him. Fellow heirs with Christ, Christians, will suffer with Christ and we will groan in this world, we don't escape that. That's what Paul has been explaining and he's not promising that our sufferings will be reversed and turned into pleasant experiences. Job's a good example of that, he suffered greatly. Much of that was restored to him, but his children weren't restored to him. He lost all of them and no doubt, while he had other children, he carried the thought of his first children

to his grave and he longed to see them. So Paul is not saying that bad things will be made good. The good that is advanced by God in us is the ultimate good, it is the final good having to do with our salvation and his glory. That's supported from the verses that follow, verse 29. We had been predestined to become conformed to the image of Christ. He is making us like his son and he uses the events of life to do that, even suffering, often, suffering.

That's how we refines our faith and that is how he strengthens our hope. We don't become strong by having an easy life. That's what we want, that's what I want, I want hard things in my life, I don't even want the little difficulties that just bring some confusion and disruption and confound my schedule. I get very frustrated by that, that's not the life that I want. I want one that's easy and smooth, but God knows better and he uses the hard things to produce the best, that's what Paul is saying. In his providence, God causes all things to work together for good. And as Paul ____ [*Inaudible*] Invictus, Mr. Henley, both so bravely meeting the bludgeoning of chance with head bloody but unbowed but divine providence teaches Christians that we are not ruled by the blind forces of chance or fate or luck, but by the all powerful, all wise God who sustains all things and directs all events in a common purpose toward a common goal, which is our good and his glory.

Because he is wholly good, because God is completely good, he does everything to advance the good of his people, his children whom he loves and his good will toward us was his plan from the endless ages of eternity past. Its purpose will be accomplished forever and ever in the future but it is rooted in eternity past, which has no beginning and since God has no beginning and nothing begins in God, this plan is eternal, it's always been that way, that's always been his design and that's indicated by the second description Paul gives of those who have this promise. It is to those who are called according to his purpose, which is his purpose to save them, as Paul explains in the next verses, verses 29 and 30 and to glorify them.

So this call that Paul speaks of here in verse 28 is not the general call of the gospel, what we think of when an evangelist invites people to believe in Jesus Christ, this is what theologians call effectual calling or efficacious grace which is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing to faith those whom God has predestined to life. That's the way Paul consistently uses the word 'call.' For example, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, he gives thanks to God for

the Thessalonians. Now why does he give thanks to God for the Thessalonians? Why isn't he saying thank you, Thessalonians, for believing? Thank you, Thessalonians, for turning from paganism and Greek philosophy and whatever else they were believing in and turning and believing in Jesus Christ? Why doesn't he thank them for that? He doesn't do that, he thanks God and the reason he is thanking God is because, he says, God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this he called you through our gospel that you may gain the glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God's the author of salvation. It begins and it ends with God. As the gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit draws hearers to Christ by means of the new birth, by planting life into dead souls, taking out hearts of stone and putting in hearts of flesh, as the new covenant is described in the Old Testament. And in doing that, in giving life, in giving new birth, he enlightens the mind and renews the will so that the person believes, is drawn to Christ. That's a work of grace and that is the reason that believers love God. It begins with God, that's what John says in 1 John 4:19, 'we love because he first loved us.' He loved us from all eternity because he loves us, he chose us and in time, called us and is now ceaselessly using everything that is a part of life, both positive and negative to make us increasingly like Jesus Christ. God even makes sin to serve his purpose. He overrules evil to produce, in us, the higher good of deeper trust in him and Christ's likeness. There is nothing in this life that is not intended, by God, to assist us on our pilgrimage through this world and assure that we will arrive safely at our destination.

Now we know this, Paul says, he says it with great confidence. How can he say that? How can we know that? Well, we know it by faith because it taught in the word of God and we believe it. We don't believe this great truth about God's providential care because we feel it. We may feel it, oftentimes we do, but that's not the reason we believe it because oftentimes we feel just the opposite. Our feelings tells us that God is not doing us good by the circumstances, that he's not involved with our life, that he doesn't care. That is not true and we don't know these things because we feel them; we know these things because we believe God's word, God has revealed himself and in spite of the circumstances, this is what is true and the scriptures are filled with this great truth and filled with examples with it and so in the time

remaining, I want to give some of those examples, most of which I think you're familiar with but we'll recall them to our memory and then some examples from history as well.

The first is from the book of Genesis, in the life of Joseph, Jacob's favorite son whose brothers became jealous of him and sold him into slavery in Egypt when he was just 17 years old. It was a sin, it was not a good thing that was done to him, it was a crime against him, you can just imagine the fear and the loneliness that this boy felt as he was being carried from his homeland from everything that he knew into a foreign land. He became a slave in Potiphar's house, where he prospered. So, things began to look up for Joseph until he was falsely accused of trying to seduce Mrs. Potiphar and then he was thrown into prison. Well, then he was in an even worse situation. I cannot imagine what it must have been like to have been in an Egyptian prison, what it would be like to be in one today, but what it was like in ancient times. He was there for two years, abandoned, it seemed. We read in Psalm 105 that they afflicted his feet with fetters. He, himself, was laid in irons. It was an unjust and miserable experience. Nothing seemed to be working in his favor, but he prospered there, too. He became interpreting dreams and eventually was brought to Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. As a result, Pharaoh promoted him from prisoner to prime minister. He governed Egypt wisely and saved many people.

A nation of Egyptians were saved because of his wise governance and people that were saved included many outside of Egypt. They included, particularly, his father and his brothers who came down in time of famine. It was all the outworking of God's providence, the unfolding of God's plan for Jacob's family in order to bring them out of Canaan with all of its terrible temptations, bring them down into Egypt, where they would be segregated and excluded from all of the bad influences there and there they would grow from a family into a great nation, that was God's plan. At the end of the book, Joseph explained that to his brothers. Jacob has died, the brothers are now fearful that Joseph will take vengeance upon them and so concerned about them, Joseph explains things. Do not be afraid, he said, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to preserve many people alive. What a great truth that is.

It's not a truth that Joseph would have understood immediately. He gained an understanding of that with perspective, with some time, with some distance because there was nothing in the events themselves that would have indicated that. There was nothing in the treachery of his brothers or in the deceit of Potiphar's wife that would have revealed God's good purpose. One point in the story to remember, Jacob, who believes that Joseph is dead, who believes that Simeon, who was being held in Egypt, was dead and is now asked to give his favorite son, Benjamin up to the Egyptian prime minister, doesn't know that what is going on in all of this cries out in his despair, 'all these things are against me.' Not knowing that all of those things were really for him. We are unaware of God's providence because he moves and he directs the events of history and the events of our lives with an invisible hand but it is a firm and loving hand and we know that. We have great confidence in that by faith. You meant evil against me but God meant that evil that you did for good, it fit his purpose.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter in God's name to the Jews in exile in Babylon. For them, it seemed like a terrible situation, it seemed like the end to them. They felt abandoned, they felt hopeless but God said through this letter that Jeremiah wrote, 'I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.' Part of that plan, though, was the Babylonian captivity. It refined the remnant. It was God's plan but that was only one part of the plan, a greater plan was coming and a greater plan is still to come and that is true for us. God has a specific plan for our lives and he works it out in our lives in hard ways, unpleasant ways. He even uses our failures to do that, even out sins. Peter's an example of that.

In Luke 22, you remember he boasted. In his pride, when the Lord explained what was going to happen, he would go to the cross, Peter said he wouldn't deny him even if everybody else denied the Lord, Peter would not do that. The Lord told him, yes you will, Peter, you'll deny me. In fact, you'll deny me three times. But then the Lord said that he had prayed for Peter and prayed that his faith would not fail and then he said that when Peter turned, when he recovered from his failure, the Lord said, 'strengthen your brothers.' Someone said he who has been through deep waters has the experience that enables him to be of help to others. Peter went through those waters; he failed miserably, as we know. He denied the Lord three times,

denied the Lord with curses. When he realized what he'd done, he wept bitterly and repented but God used that failure greatly to change Peter, to refine his character, to humble him, to give him a perspective that was realistic and a sensitivity to the frailties of other people so that he could help them when they failed and he did. Years later he wrote in 1 Peter 5, 'humble yourselves.' Peter learned humility. 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you at the proper time. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert.' Peter had not been that. Peter had not been sober about his condition, Peter had gone with the Lord and the other disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and the Lord had asked him to stand and watch, be vigilant for him and Peter had slept.

He wasn't alert, Peter understood the frailties of man, he understood our weaknesses, so he says be sober, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour and Peter knew that very well because that same devil had sifted him like wheat. We're easily sifted. Peter knew what he was talking about and because he'd gone through this experience, these terrible waters, he'd pass through them, he could give counsel to others and be an encouragement to those who stumble badly. God works things for our good, in our disappointments. The greatest disappointment to a parent is a prodigal child. Christian parents pray for their children and they're disillusioned when their prayers seem to go unanswered but as Paul wrote in verse 26, we do not know how to pray as we should. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit and when our prayers contradict God's will and God's plan, the spirit overrules us.

Now, we may not understand that at the time, we certainly don't and we may be very discouraged by that but we know that God is wiser than we are and his plan is a better plan than ours. Monica learned that; she was the mother of Augustine. She was an earnest Christian, she was a devoted wife, married to a pagan man, a devoted mother to her son, who, for much of his childhood and early manhood was pagan, she prayed hard for Augustine's salvation. When he decided to leave home in North Africa and go to Rome for his career, she prayed earnestly that God would keep him from going. She had the same concerns that parents today have when their daughter goes off to New York or some other big city which has all of the dangers and temptations that can bring harm to a young person. Monica feared that for her

son, feared for his safety, feared for his moral life, feared for her son's soul. So she prayed, earnestly, for him.

Augustine tells the story in his confessions, how she followed him down to the seashore weeping, begging him to stay, praying that he would not leave and he says he deceived her. He told her that he was not going to leave, he's just going to go on the boat for a time and he boards the ship and he leaves. It was a bitter disappointment for her, just as it was for the father, when the prodigal son took his inheritance and left for a far country. But as Augustine tells the story, framed in a prayer to God and as you know, the confessions are presented as Augustine's prayers to God and in this prayer he writes of his mother and addressing God said, 'she did not know how great a joy you would fashion for her out of my absence; how her prayers were really going to be answered ultimately.' By not answering that prayer to keep him in North Africa because it was when he left and went to Italy that he was brought to faith in Christ and in retrospect, Augustine saw God's invisible hand guiding him at every step. 'You worked within me that I might be persuaded to go to Rome, he said.'

God works all things after that counsel of his will, Ephesians 1:11 and he causes all things to work together for good to those who love him, whether we understand it at the time or not. Our greatest disappointment may be the first step to our greatest joy; it was for Monica. Sometimes that happens through injustice and persecution. It did with Joseph in Egypt. John Bunyan is an example. He had a large ministry from Bedford to London. He had a family to care for but he was arrested for preaching the gospel and thrown in Bedford jail, it was an injustice. John Owen was a great admirer of Bunyan. Owen was the greatest of the Puritan theologians, he was a brilliant man who was vice chancellor of Oxford University, he was a man of the court, Bunyan was not. He was a simple man, he had only a very rudimentary education; he learned to read, he learned to write, he was a tinker by trade but he could preach.

So when the king asked Owen why he listened to an uneducated tinker, Owen said, 'could I possess the tinker's ability for preaching, please, your majesty, I would gladly relinquish all my learning.' So John Owen used his significant influence to get John Bunyan released from jail but he failed. What a disappointment that must have been for him. A disappointment to Owen, a disappointment to Bunyan, to Bunyan's family and a

disappointment to the many people who listened to Bunyan preach. But it was during that imprisonment that a book began to take shape in Bunyan's dreams. When he was released he came out of jail with a manuscript of Pilgrim's Progress. What disappointed Owen and others was used by God to produce one of the most influential books of the western world. In fact, one of the most influential books in the world.

There are many ways in which the providence of God guides us into the greatest blessings by preventing our plans. Sometimes God even changes the weather to do that, to prevent our plans from occurring and achieving his own will. He brought a famine on the whole world to bring Jacob's family down into Egypt; he caused a rain storm on the sea in order to get Paul's boat off course and bring it to the island of Malta so that the gospel would reach the people there, Acts 27 and 28. He made it snow in order to get the great Baptist, Charles Spurgeon saved. You've heard the story, I'm sure, I mean, you've heard me preach for very long, you've heard the story of Charles Spurgeon's conversion but it illustrates the point very well.

When Spurgeon was a boy of 16, he came under great conviction over his lost condition. It was December 1849 and the Christmas season. As a child, he'd been very much aware of the requirements of the law and his inability to meet them but the concern about his guilt and the need of salvation increased that year. He went to difference churches to learn how to be saved. He heard good sermons on the sovereignty of God, for example, which he calls a sublime truth, sermons that he would agree to but at the time, he didn't hear the way of salvation. 'What I wanted to know was how can I get my sins forgiven and they never told me that.' So it's very important, regardless of the text or scripture that we're preaching, to bring the gospel in because some of you may not be saved and you need to hear the gospel. So Spurgeon went to various churches, he heard good sermons, but he didn't hear how to get his sins forgiven.

One Sunday morning, when he was home from school on Christmas holiday, he set off for church and went with very heavy heart, great despair. As he went, it began snowing. The storm became so bad that he couldn't continue and he had to change his plans so he turned down a side street, went into a little primitive Methodist chapel. Inside, there were just a dozen

or so people; the minister wasn't there, he'd been snowed out. Finally, a man in the congregation went up into the pulpit, Spurgeon described him as tall and thin, a simple man, not well educated. In fact, Spurgeon called him really stupid but God can even make a donkey to speak the truth and he used this man, who opened the bible to Isaiah 45:22 and read, 'look unto me and be Ye saved all the ins of the earth.' Spurgeon said that the man didn't even pronounce the words correctly but he said it didn't matter because he saw, in that text, a glimmer of hope.

The man explained how simple it was; just look, he spoke a while, he said as much as he could on the text and then he focused his gaze on young Mr. Spurgeon and he said, 'young man, you look very miserable' and Spurgeon said he was very miserable and then he continued, 'young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look, look, look. You have nothing to do but look and live' and Spurgeon did and was saved there on that snowy morning in that primitive, Methodist chapel. God made it snow in order to keep the preacher out of church and get the boy into church so that he could hear the simplest presentation of the gospel.

Everyday God moves heaven and earth and human hearts for his people, to bring his elect to himself and cause them to grow up and be like Jesus Christ. He's absolutely sovereign over all events and circumstances, even the most difficult and tragic of circumstances, even death itself. Often, Godly men are taken from us, they're taken everyday. Sometimes they're taken at a young age, sometimes they're taken by violence, the apostles were and we wonder why. Why, at this time, did this individual depart? Why was he taken from us? So often we cannot see how events fit in God's plan but sometimes we do, sometimes we have perspective on that. When Ridley and Latimer were burned at the stake in London, it was a terrible loss for the church, but as the flames went up, Latimer said, 'be of good comfort, master Ridley and play the man we shall, this day, light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out.' They did and others did as well.

There were more martyrs in England and their brave deaths touched the hearts of the people who would gather the ashes and weep over them and soon public opinion began to identify with the Protestant cause and the reformation took hold in England. God works tragedies to a good end but so often we cannot see that, we cannot understand the reason for

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our sorrows and they remain unresolved in our mind, like so many loose threads and we do wonder. Who is in charge here? We can respond as the poet Henley did, believing life is random and putting on a brave face to endure the bludgeoning of chance or we can approach life with faith in God's word, as another poet, William Cooper did, who wrote one of the finest hymns in the English language. It begins, 'God moves in a mystery way/His wonders to perform/He plants his footsteps in the sea/And rides upon the storm/Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take/The clouds ye so much dread/Are big with mercy and shall break/In blessings on your head/Judge not the Lord by feeble sense/But trust Him for His grace/Behind a frowning providence/He hides a smiling face.'

That's a poetical explanation of Romans 8:28, we see that smiling face in the events of providence by faith. That's how we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him. That's the pillow we can rest on when sickness comes or when death touches us. We know, even then, that God is working out his plan of blessing for us. Is that your confidence? It's not a promise for everyone, it is a promise for God's children, for those who love him. Are you God's children? Are you God's child? We become God's children by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. If you have not believed in Christ, realize that you are a sinner, that he is the savior, the only savior. Apart from him, you are lost but the way of escape and the way to be found is through faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. So believe in him, look to him. You have nothing to do but look and live. May God help you to do that and may God help all of us to trust him in the midst of his providential care for us. I'll conclude with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you that, behind a frowning providence, you hide a smiling face. You are the sovereign God over all events and all things and over the lives of each one of us and we thank you, that you are not only all powerful, but all wise and all loving and merciful. Help us to lay hold of that great truth and to live lives of faithful service to you, in the midst of the most difficult of times. We can do that by your grace and only by it. You've extended great grace to a lost people, in the person and work of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him, for his death for us. It's in his name we pray, Amen.

