

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with one of the many great promises in the Bible, and also two types of plays performed in ancient Greece. The promise in the Bible is: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28)**. The two types of plays performed in ancient Greece are “comedies” and “tragedies”.

Let's start with “comedies”. A comedy is predictable. A comedy is relaxing and makes you laugh because nothing “tragic” happens in a comedy. No one dies or get's killed in a comedy. No one gets sweaty palms or shortness of breath while watching a comedy. Take, for example, the cartoon of the Wiley Coyote and the Road Runner. When you watch one of those cartoons you are relaxed and absolutely certain that the road runner will never be captured and eaten by the coyote. Further, all the bad things that happen to the coyote are funny because they are never fatal. This is the very essence of a comedy.

A tragedy is also predictable. It is designed to create anxiety, uncertainty, and fear. Something terrible always happens in a tragedy. Alfred Hitchcock was famous for writing tragedies. In fact, he became known as the “master of suspense”. He directed more than 50 feature films and uncertainty and fear were an integral part of them all. In some perverted way, those who saw his movies or read his books, got a “voyeuristic thrill” out of someone's else's suffering. Take, for example, Hitchcock's thriller “Final Escape”. You know in advance it will be terrifying. The story involves a prisoner named John Perry. John devised an ingenious plan to escape from his maximum security prison. To make the plan work he secured the help of old Doc. Doc was an aging alcoholic who worked in the prison infirmary. John planned to hide in a casket with the next prisoner who died. The casket would then be taken outside of the prison for burial. As soon as everyone left, old Doc would come to the rescue. As we said, since this is a tragedy, you know in advance that something horrifying is going to happen. It did! Initially, it seemed that the plan was going according to schedule. Just as they had planned John was buried alive in the casket with a corpse. The suspense grows as John continued to wait for old Doc to dig him up. Finally, in a state of panic John ripped off the shroud of the corpse. Touche! To his horror he discovered that the dead man was none other than old Doc himself. The man John had depended upon to save him was dead and in the same casket he was. There would be no rescue!

Now, let's wash this negative thought out of our minds with the Scriptures. The expression “the washing of water by the Word” is found in Eph. 5:26. The Bible has a way of cleansing our minds of cloudy thoughts. The promise of Rom. 8:28 can cleanse your mind of fear and fill it with confidence. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7). The wonderful promises in the Bible can make your life like a comedy. You “know” in advance that whatever happens God will work together for good. Following Christ, of course, is the key. The promise of our text is for those who are “called according to His purpose”.

Take Paul himself as an example. No matter what happened to Paul, God turned it into something good. The promise begins with the words “we know”. Paul was absolutely certain that no matter what happened God would make something good come out of it. That’s why Paul and Silas were singing when they were prisoners in a Philippian jail. He knew something good would come of it, and it did. Sure enough God sent an earthquake and the jailer and his whole household were converted to Christ (Acts 16). Similarly, when Paul was a prisoner in Rome he made converts in Caesar’s household (Phil. 1). When Satan gave Paul a thorn in the flesh God turned it into a powerful blessing (2 Cor. 12). When Paul was threatened with death he rejoiced because he “knew” that to be absent from the body was to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5). The wonderful promise of our text was not just for Paul, it is for everyone!

But remember! Christ is the key. You can choose to follow Christ, just like you can choose to go to a comedy. On the surface it seems that life is filled with many choices, but Jesus reduced our decisions to only two. In the final analysis there are only two masters (Matt. 6:24). Ultimately we choose to follow Christ, or we choose to follow Satan. How simple! How profound! Serving God makes your life like a comedy. Serving Satan is a tragedy.

Even though four of Paul’s letters were written from prison, they are letters filled with joy and none of them is negative. Paul, for example, never considered himself a prisoner of Rome, but rather a prisoner of Christ (Eph. 3:1). He was confident that Christ could deliver him from prison any time he chose to do so (See Acts 5:17 - 20, and 12:5 - 11). His letter to the Philippians, also written from prison, contains this inspired advice: **“Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” (Phil. 4:8).**

If you choose to truly follow Christ you can “know” that no matter what happens God can turn it into something good. If Christ is in your heart He will help you to focus your mind on the good things listed in Phil. 4:8. When you commit your life to Christ you will discover by your own personal experience: **“that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce