

“All Things Work Together for Good” (2)

In last week's *NEWSLETTER*, we looked at a couple of Old Testament stories in which the scripture “**..all things work together for good for those that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose**” applies. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, grew to be the person Pharaoh placed in charge of Egypt. It was because of this, Joseph was able to provide for his family who had been facing starvation due to a famine in their area. Joseph told his brothers that God had placed him in that situation, that they were not responsible for his being in Egypt.

Esther was queen of Persia. Her uncle Mordecai had angered one of Xerxes' high officials, and that official, Haman, had convinced Xerxes to issue a decree that the Jews should be exterminated. Mordecai, Esther's uncle, told her **to “go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.”** (Esther 4:8) Esther was hesitant, fearing the king's possible anger at her for going into him without being pre-announced. Mordecai sent word to Esther that she had been allowed to come to her position for the express purpose of pleading for her people. Essentially, God had placed her there. The king relented and the Jews were saved.

We are in the business of making plans and living our lives the way we want to live them. However, more often than not, God has different plans for us. The wise Solomon said in **Proverbs 19:21**:

“Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.”

It would be good for us to remember that. No matter what we want, it is what God wants for us that will be the end result. We must understand that God's will for us is far more important than our feeble plans for ourselves.

Paul understood that. One excellent example of Paul's trust in the Lord is found in **Acts 16**. Paul had made plans to go to the province of Asia, but he was unable to. So he preached in Phrygia and Galatia. He then wanted to go to Bithynia, but couldn't cross the border at Mysia. So, instead, he went to Troas. It is at Troas, he is called in a dream to go to Macedonia. They needed help, and Paul was just the right man to provide that help.

Why was he unable to go into Asia and Bithynia? Luke records what Paul had reasoned. As far as Asia goes, he had **“been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.”** (Acts 16:6) What about Bithynia? **“...the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” enter.** (Acts 16:7) Why did they eventually preach in Macedonia? In the words of Luke's history: Paul had concluded **“that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”** (Acts 16:10) In spite of Paul's plans, God was seeing to it that he go where he was most needed.

It is the Lord, in **Isaiah 48:16**, who says:

***“I am the LORD your God,
who teaches you what is best for you,
who directs you in the way you should go.”***

Your actions often have unintended results. Maybe unintended by you, but not unintended by God. God is intentional in every move you, through your own free will, make. One last verse, to reinforce my point:

***“In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the LORD establishes their steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)***

---Johnny Stephens