The Story: Chapter Nineteen

The Return Home

So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well.  Matthew 6:31-33

**All bad things come to an end:**

* The Babylonian Empire fell to Persia (539 BC)
* The 70 year exile was completed.
* The King of Persia (Cyrus) decreed that the Israelites return home (*The Story* p. 263-264)
  + God **moved the heart** of a pagan king.
  + God **provided the means** for the people to return and build.
    - The neighbors gave them **valuable gifts.**
    - The king gave them **items belonging in the temple.**
  + God **moved in the hearts** of His people.

**Many a good beginning have a bad end:**

* First things first
  + Rebuilt the **altar.**
  + Resumed offering **sacrifices** according to God’s Law.
  + Laid the foundation for the **temple.**
* **Confusion** and **discouragement** are only a breath away.
  + The most **dangerous** phrase. (*The Story* p. 265)
    - “We’ve **always done it** this way.”
    - “It’s not the way it **was before**.”
  + Help from the **neighbors.**
    - They did not **believe** or **practice** the same faith.
    - Unionism: **join forces** despite disagreement in doctrine.
  + The work **stopped.** (*The Story* p. 266)
    - The people said, “The time **has not come**.”
    - God said, “Give **careful thought** to your ways.”

**God works something bad into a good end:**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+8&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-28145i" \o "See footnote i)] have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

* God works to **restore** the broken relationship (*The Story* p. 266 - 268)
  + **Disobedience** is always personal.
  + **Our priorities** reveal the condition of our heart.
  + **God disciples** those He loves (Hebrews 12:6)
  + **God graces** people with His presence.
    - He is characterized by **abundance**.
    - He is the One who makes it **great**.
    - He is the One who gives us **peace**.
  + God said, “It is always about the **relationship**. (*The Story* p. 269)
* **Obstacles** become **opportunities**. (*The Story* p. 270)
  + No fear = **faith**.
  + Many will come because **God is with you**.
  + Enemies **abound**. (*The Story* p. 270)
    - Keep **working**.
    - Stay **true** to the original command.
  + God provides **generously**.
* **Celebrate**! (*The Story* p. 273)

**The priorities of Jesus for a great end:**

* **Worship** the Father
* **Embrace** the lost.
* **Restore** brokenness.
* **Confront** hypocrisy.
* **Proclaim** the full Gospel.
* **Serve** others.
* **Make** disciples.