

Pt 26 Romans 8:28, All Things Work Together for Good

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

We continue in our studies in the Book of Romans by looking at only one verse this morning – Romans 8:28. I told you last time that this verse is so big there was just no way to include it in our last message.

We must keep in mind context as we study God's Word. This verse isn't meant to just stand alone, although many people try to use it that way, but rather it is an answer or continuation of what Paul said in the previous verses which were dealing the future glory that awaits those that belong to God. Paul said we are "**saved by hope**," and remember the word hope in the Bible is not the same as the hope we are used to. Hope in the Bible is a certainty. We have complete trust and assurance in this hope.

All through this chapter Paul has been stating facts about our salvation. He started out in verse 1 stating "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.**" In other words, once we were saved, we CANNOT come under condemnation for our sin.

- In verse 2, we have been made "**free from the law of sin and death.**"
- In verse 11 that our bodies will be **quickened** or raised up just as Jesus was.
- In verse 14 that we are "**the sons of God.**"
- In verse 16 he says we are "**the children of God.**"
- In verse 17 he says we are "**heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.**"
- In verse 24 he says we are "**saved by hope**"
- And in verses 26 and 27 he says the Holy Spirit makes "**intercession for us**"

All those things are **facts about our salvation**.

Which brings us to our opening text this morning in Romans 8:28 which starts out "**And we know.**" Notice he did not say, and we THINK or we BELIEVE, or we FEEL, no, he says, **and we KNOW**. There is no question or doubt about it – it is a fact just like all those other things he listed in the previous verses are facts.

Romans 8:28 is probably one of the most quoted verses in the Bible and one that many Christians hold on to and have adopted as their life verse. I sure don't want to cause anyone despair but I'm afraid many people misuse this verse and do not quite understand what it is talking about.

Growing up in a Christian home, attending church every Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, and numerous occasions in between, as well as my 30 something years in the ministry, I have heard Romans 8:28 mis-quoted and misused for almost everything you can imagine. Someone lost a job, a home, a family member, a husband, a wife, a child, some money, their health, etc...and some well-meaning person will say to them "*well, the Bible says all things work together for good.*" Then they look at them with pity and walk away like that is supposed to bring some kind of comfort...

Needless to say, that has always bothered me. I want us to look at this passage of Scripture for what it really says and how it should be interpreted.

As you well know, the Book of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul and was addressed to believers that lived in Rome. Paul's desire was always to go to Rome, and he eventually did go there as a prisoner, however, at the time he wrote this Epistle he had not been there. He had led several of the members of the Church to

Christ, so he had a personal connection with them. His purpose for writing the letter was for doctrinal instruction, theology, and to give them a discourse in Christian faith and living. In other words, it was an all-purpose Christian handbook.

By the time Paul gets to Romans chapter 8, he is providing great detail on Christian faith and how God works in a believer's life and heart.

Here in Romans 8:28 we see the promise that **all things work together for good**. What things is he talking about when he says **ALL THINGS**? Does that mean EVERYTHING? Well, yes, that's exactly what it means. ALL things; good things, bad things, frustrating things, sorrowful things, joyful things, sinful things, you name it, ALL things are covered here. God uses ALL things for His glory and for our benefit. That seems strange to think that God uses our sin for good, but He does. He doesn't cause us to sin to produce good from it, but he uses that sin in our life for our ultimate good.

Immediately when you hear that word good you start thinking of things that you consider to be good. If you are like most people you think of health, wealth, happiness, fulfillment, safety, comfort and so on. These are certainly all good things that we all desire and enjoy; however, the good that the Bible is referring to has very little to do with anything in the present. In fact, it is referring to our future or eternal good. We know this because this entire portion of Scripture is referring to a future event when the **Lord returns and the manifestation of the sons of God**.

This is not referring to carnal and fleshly wants and desires that you may think are good. It isn't referring to temporary good such as happiness, getting your way, everything working out for you the way you want, keeping your job, restoring your health, etc...It is talking about being good for your Christian walk, your faith, your testimony, your patience, and your being conformed into the image of Christ. That day will not come about until we leave this world of sin which will be a future event.

It says "**to them that love God**" That phrase "**them that love God**" is referring to Christians or Saints. We love him because he first loved us. The truth is, there are two classifications of people in this world: those that love God and those that hate God. You can't straddle the fence here, you are either one or you are the other.

Listen to what it says in **Romans 5:6-10**

- 6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Unsaved people are enemies of God and therefore they do not love him, but they hate him.

So, this verse does not apply to the unsaved. It is ridiculous to tell a lost person that "**all things work together for good**" unless you add the next part which says, "**to them that love God.**" Clearly a lost person does not love God and the promise does not apply, neither could it apply because, remember, the good is Spiritual good. A lost person cannot have spiritual goodness. A lost person has no hope of future eternal glory.

It says **“to them who are the called”**

Who are **“the called”** he is referring to? Well, Paul starts out this Epistle to the Romans by addressing them as such: **Romans 1:6-7** Among whom are ye also the **called of Jesus Christ**: 7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints**, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto **them which are called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning **chosen you** to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto **he called you by our gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, **and called**:

Revelation 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him **are called**, and chosen, and faithful.

I think it is clear who the “called” are, don’t you? It is those in whom God has given his effectual calling to and have accepted His call. In other words, saved people. If you are saved today, God called you. No, he didn’t pick up the phone and dial your number, but he sent out his effectual call to believe in Him and he did that through the Gospel.

You do realize that you cannot be saved unless God calls you, right? Jesus Himself says this in **John 6:44** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:65 And he said, **Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.**

The fact is, God pre-ordained or predestined that we should be saved and called us before he even created this world.

In the next two verses here in Romans 8 we see this: **Romans 8:29-30** For whom he did foreknow, he also did **predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover **whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.**

Listen to these verses: **2 Timothy 1:8-9** Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to **his own purpose** and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began**,

Did you notice it said, “**according to his own purpose**”? What does our opening text say? **Romans 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called **according to his purpose.**

Perhaps one of the greatest passages of Scripture in all the Bible that explains our calling being predestinated can be found in **Ephesians 1:3-14**

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

God not only calls us to salvation to accept Him as our Savior, he also calls us to live a holy life that is pleasing and acceptable to Him, and He calls us to fulfill His Great Commission, just to name a few. If a person has not been called by God and has not accepted the invitation, then Romans 8:28 is meaningless to them.

The last part of our verse in **Romans 8:28c... *called according to his purpose.*** Everything that God works together in us is entirely dependent upon HIS purpose. It is not OUR purpose but HIS purpose. You could also call it HIS WILL.

Someone once told me; “I just don’t love my husband anymore, I think God wants me to divorce him and marry someone else. I know it’s going to be hard, but all things work together for good...” I’m sorry, but that is not God’s will or purpose. If what you are doing is contrary to God’s will or purpose it has absolutely nothing to do with Romans 8:28.

The Bible speaks of God’s purpose and will many times and it is always said to be through Jesus Christ. So, these things that work together for good, are things that are according to God’s purpose through Christ Jesus.

But what about all these well-meaning people going around quoting Romans 8:28 for every bad thing that happens in life? I know we all want comforting words to say to folks that are going through a trial but in the case of a death of a believer it would be more appropriate to quote **Psalms 116:15: Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints....**Or **2 Corinthians 5:8: We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**

I think the ultimate take away from this today is knowing that no matter what may come our way, whether good or bad, God uses it for his purpose and for our future glory. We can find rest and assurance in our Salvation and that it is eternal.