

The Promise of Security, Part 2

Romans 8:28

45-65

Well let's open our Bibles again to Romans 8:28, that great, great verse that we began to examine last Lord's Day evening. I'm equally thrilled and excited about what the Spirit of God will teach us tonight as I was last week. This verse just continues to unfold great profound, wonderful, and rich truth for us.

I want to read verses 28 through 30 so that you get the whole setting. Romans 8, "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. For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. 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."

As we have learned this chapter is a mountain range of many peaks and we could call the mountain range security in the Spirit. And if that is the name of the range then verse 28 is the highest peak of all, the most majestic mountain in the range. It sums up for us the security of the believer in a way that no other portion of Scripture does. When it says and "we know that all things work together for good" that is a statement of great, far-reaching security. Now there is so much here, as we said last time that I want to break it down into four simple parts: the extent of security, the recipients of security, the source of security, and finally a brief word about the certainty of security. And I see those all in verse 28.

Now remember last time we talked about the extent of security, found in the statement, "and we know that all things work together for good." That is an absolutely comprehensive statement. The all things is unlimited. We talked about all good things and all bad things. All things work together ultimately for good whether we're talking about suffering or struggling with sin or sin itself. Those things which in themselves are bad are overruled by God for our good, present and ultimate in the future.

Now in the present sense I tried to point out last time that all things that happen to us in this life, all things good and all things bad, work together for our good here and now. They refine us and we looked particularly at those things that we mentioned: suffering, struggling, and sin. We think they are bad in themselves and we think right, they are, but God overrules them for our good. And we said that bad things work for our good here and now in this life many ways. They teach us to hate sin. They help us to see our fallenness. They motivate us to desire God. They conform us to the sufferings of Christ. They drive us to prayer. They cause us to be humbled. They give us data with which, and experience with which, we can help others. They cause us to be thankful for God's deliverance. They cause us to love God's grace, and to long for heaven.

And so even in the here and now all things are working together for good. Matters in this life that happen to us, that in themselves seem bad, can be in this life good for the reasons that I just stated. But I believe the impact of verse 28 intends to go beyond that, and that the real good of verse 28 is ultimate good. The future good of eternal glory and I think that is supported by the context of verses 29 and 30, that we're moving toward the ultimate glorification. It is also supported by the context of the prior passage, which talks about us waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body groaning for glory. It's glory that we're waiting for. It's the ultimate glory of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, a home in the eternal heavens. And everything that happens to us in this life moves us to that glory. Nothing can withstand that; nothing can fight against that successfully. God overrules everything for our good here and now as He refines us and our ultimate glory in His eternal presence.

And we saw last time that the Spirit of God ministers to us in keeping us, in upholding us, in interceding for us, that we may be kept to that day of final glory. So what the verse is really saying is that nothing can happen to us to overrule God's ultimate plan for our good in Christ Jesus. And that's the essence of verses 29 and 30. That He foreknew us, predestinated us, called us, justified us and He will glorify us.

And so there can never be anything held against us; there can never be anything to take that away from us. And verse 31 sums it up by saying, "If God be for us (What?) who can be against us?" If God has done all of this to guarantee our glory, who can withstand God? Who can overrule the work of God? Can death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, any creature? And the answer is no. None of those or all of those together cannot change God's plan for our ultimate good. Little wonder that the chapter ends in a great paeon of praise, a great benediction.

So the first point, back now to verse 28, that's established in the verse is the extent of security. It is far-reaching enough to embrace everything. All things, by God's power and grace, are working together for our ultimate good. That's the extent of our security. Tremendous statement! Tonight I want us to focus on the recipients of security.

Now that statement is qualified. We know that all things work together for good, but not to everybody. Not everybody in the world can claim that promise. Not everybody can hang on to that secure hope. It's qualified. The recipients are named: To them that love God, to them who are the called. You can stop there. Two phrases identify those who are the recipients of this incredible promise.

First of all, them that love God. Secondly, them who are the called. Now let's talk about those phrases. Maybe you've never even thought about them before. Maybe you've never examined the verse that closely. I think you're going to be thrilled to see what you see; to them that love God, first of all. Now that is just a title for Christians, for redeemed people, for those who know God through faith. We can be called children of God or sons of God. We can be called believers. We can be called worshippers, true worshippers, saints, Christians. We can be called a lot of things in Scripture and we are and all of God's redeemed have received very special titles. This is another one of those. We are identified as them that love God. That's just a way to identify a believer from his viewpoint, from his side. On the other side, from God's side, it is them that are called. So from our side we are the ones who love God and from His side He has called us.

So you see an identification of the believer from both the side of the believer and the side of God. But

nothing is more indicative of the character of a Christian than the statement, "them that love God." If anything is true of a believer it is that he or she loves God. We are people who love God. And it's for us that all things work together for good. This is a wonderful way to describe redeemed people.

Let me take you back and I want you to follow me if you can, if not with your Bible, with your pen and jot some things down. I want to show you how this phrase is not new. Back to Exodus chapter 20 and verse 6. It talks about God, the great God, the jealous God who "visits iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me," and verse 6 of Exodus 20 it's "showing mercy onto thousands of them that love Me and (What) keep my commandments." So here you have all of humanity divided into two parts. In verse 5, "Those who hate Me" says God, and in verse 6, "Those that love Me."

So, believing people have been identified as those that love God from all the way back in the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 9 says, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God who keepeth covenant and mercy with them who love Him and keep His commandments." And then verse 10, "And repays them who hate Him to their face to destroy them. He will not be slack to them that hate Him, He will repay him to his face." And again mankind is divided into two groups: those that hate God, those that love Him. Go to Nehemiah chapter 1 and verse 5 and it says that, verse 4 we need to start, "It came to pass when I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." And Nehemiah says in verse 5, "I said I beseech Thee O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awe inspiring God who keeps covenant and mercy to them who love Him and observe His commandments." Now again this is the third time in the Old Testament that God's redeemed people have been identified as those who love Him and keep His commandments, those who love Him and keep His commandments. There's no escaping that as a unique, identifying mark of the redeemed.

Go to Psalm 37, Psalm 37. Now in verse... There's several places that sort of allude to this same idea. Verse 17, "The arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the upright." And here we find again the same idea; that God identifies with people who keep His commandments, which flows out of a love for who He is.

Now further in the chapter you find other marks, again the upright are mentioned in verse 37. The wicked are mentioned in verse 38. And the contrast in both is made. The Old Testament then marks out, and I could give you many other illustrations, but the Old Testament marks out people who are redeemed as those that love God and manifest that love in a life of obedience to the law of God. There's no escaping those identifying marks.

Now elsewhere in the Psalms we find similar insight. In Psalm 69 verse 36, it says, "The seed also of His servants shall inherit it and they who love His name shall dwell therein." That is in Zion. "They who love His name shall dwell therein." Again it's the basic same thought. Just a couple others come to my mind. Psalm 97, I think it's verse 10, "Ye who love the Lord hate evil." "Ye who love the Lord hate evil." And again believers are identified as those who love God. Psalm 116 in verse 1 the psalmist said, "I love the Lord." "I love the Lord." Now listen to this next phrase, "Because He's heard my voice and my supplication." I love the Lord. That's a simple and glorious thought.

Coming to the end of the Psalms just one other one comes to mind, verse 20 of the 145th Psalm. It says, "The Lord preserves all those who love Him." "All those who love Him." And again you can see that this is repeated again and again. And I just want you to know the familiarity that the Old

Testament writers had with this concept. In Isaiah it is also indicated that God's people are those who love Him. In 56:6, "The sons of the foreigner that join themselves to the Lord to serve Him and to love the name of the Lord."

Now let's go to the New Testament with that in mind, and I Corinthians, Chapter 2, for an example. Says this: "Eye hath not seen," verse 9, "Nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared," for whom, "them that love Him," them that love Him. Maybe it has escaped you that this is such an identifying mark. I Corinthians 8:3, "But if any man love God, the same is known by him." Anybody who belongs to God loves God; that's just very, very basic.

You remember James 1:12? "Blessed is the man that endures temptation for when he is tried he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that (What?) love Him," that love Him. I think it's elsewhere in James too, isn't it? Chapter 2, I'm not going to try to find it, it's somewhere. But why is this phrase so common? Why do we see it in Old Testament, see it in New Testament. And why here, back now to Romans 8, why does Paul use this phrase? Why doesn't he say, "We know that all things work together for good to them" that are saved, to them that are redeemed, to the children of God, the sons of God, believers, saints, Christians, whatever? Why does He say, "To them that love God?" Well I believe that because He is affirming a very basic central element in salvation and that is that true saving faith goes beyond just believing. "The devils believe and tremble," James 2:19 says. True salvation, get this now, produces lovers of God.

Now hang onto this because I want to develop this and you're going to find it fascinating. True salvation produces lovers of God, those who truly love God. Do you remember Ephesians 6:24, "Peace be to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Then verse 24, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." In other words grace belongs only to those who genuinely love God and genuinely love the Lord Jesus Christ. Very, very important biblical truth. You remember Luke 7, verse 46? "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?" It's at 6:46, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" In other words, the Lord is saying, "Look, if I look at your life and I don't see obedience then your calling me Lord, Lord doesn't mean anything because if I don't see obedience, which is the fruit of love, then there's no love there."

Go over to 7 now and the same verse really. You have the anointing of Jesus, the woman comes and anoints Him and in verse 47, he says, "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much. To whom little is forgiven, the same (What?) love is little." What's the point? When we have been forgiven much we what? We love much. That's the mark of the true believer. We love much.

In John 15:14, our Lord gives us what is a familiar and essential thought. He says, "Greater love hath no man than this," verse 13, "That a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends (That is, you love Me.) if you do whatever I command you." In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says, "The love of Christ constrains us."

So it is clear to us then that a believer, a true believer, is one who loves much, who loves God much, who loves the Lord Jesus Christ much. Now let me say this, very important: We don't love God as fully as we ought to, right? I mean we're not saying that if you're really saved you will love God with an absolutely and utterly perfect love. No. You will love God, and you will love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will love God much and you will love Christ much, but not as much as you should. That's

why Philippians 1:9 says, "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."

Now do you remember John 21, where Jesus confronted Peter and Jesus said, "Do you love Me?" You remember that? And Peter said, "I like you a lot," and he wouldn't use the Lord's word because he knew that his life was a life that had expressed disobedience and he didn't want to claim the highest kind of love when he'd been disobedient so he said, "I like you a lot." The second time the Lord said, "Do you love Me?" He said, "I like you a lot." The third time the Lord said, "Do you even like Me a lot," calling into account his disobedience and denial and at that point Peter was grieved and broken in his heart and he responded by saying, "Lord You know everything. You know I like you a lot. You know I love You." In other words He called on omniscience to examine his heart to find there true love, if mingled with disobedience, nonetheless true love. That is the mark of a true believer. It is.

And by the way we love Him for who He is as much as for what He has done. The psalmist expresses the deep love of one who is redeemed when in verse 1 and 2 of the 42nd Psalm he says, "As the deer pants after the water brook, so pants by soul after Thee O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" The longing heart of love that wants more than anything else to be in the presence of God, to know the presence of God. And Psalm 73:25, says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." Now this is the heart of the redeemed.

Now beloved I want you to understand this because I think it's important for us to know that this is a basic element of genuine redemption, loving God, loving God. Now let's ask a question: If the redeemed are those that love God, even though they don't love Him as much as they should, they love Him much, that's clear from Scripture, what are the qualities of this love? How can we know that we have this love? Is it emotion we're looking for? What is it?

Well I think we're given a pretty good hint in the Old Testament when it keeps saying over and over them that love Me and what? Keep My commandments. But let's talk about the kind of love that is manifest from the redeemed toward God. Okay? And I'm going to give you a list of qualities. First of all I believe this love is a love that meditates on God's majestic glory. It is a meditating kind of love that is thrilled with who God is. Psalm 18, listen to this: "I will love Thee O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength in whom I will trust, my shield and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised." It is a love, then, that meditates on God's majestic glory.

Secondly, it is a love that trusts in God's great power. It is a love that trusts in God's great power. Psalm 31 verse 23, "For I said," rather verse 23, "O love the Lord all ye His saints, for the Lord preserves the faithful. He preserves the faithful." The next verse says, "Be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart all ye that hope in the Lord." So it is a love first of all that meditates on God's majestic glory. We could say it is a worshipping love. Secondly it is a love that trusts in God's power. It is a trusting love that believes God is going to deliver. God is going to express His care.

Let me add a third. I believe this love is a love that seeks communion with God. It is a love that seeks communion. All love seeks to commune with its object. And in Psalm 63 we read in verse 1, "O God, Thou art my God. Early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee. My flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see Thy power and Thy glory as I have seen Thee in the

sanctuary. Because Thy loving kindness is better in life...than life, my lips shall praise Thee." And listen to Psalm 84 verse 2 along the same line: "My soul longeth, ye even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Yea the sparrow hath found an house and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young. Even Thine altars O Lord of hosts, my king and my God. Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house. They will still be praising Thee." And this is to say to us that this love is a love that seeks to be in the presence of God, to commune with the living God.

Let me give you a fourth thought. It is also a love that secures the peace of the soul. You know people who don't have that kind of a love relationship that everyone seeks are in an anxiety situation. People are anxious, they are upset, they're troubled seeking love, and when they find the perfect object of their love there is great soul rest and I believe that is so very true on the divine level. When we come to know God and to experience His love we enter into a peace like no other peace. Psalm 119:165, says, "Great peace have they who love Thy law." It is the peace of God comes to the heart.

Let me give you another thought. I believe this love is not only a love that meditates on God's majestic glory, that trusts in God's great power, that seeks sweet communion with God, that secures the peace of the soul, but it is a love that is sensitive to God's feelings. It is a love that is sensitive to God's feelings. You can't injure God without those who love God feeling the pain anymore than you can harm a member of a family or a lover without the partner of that loved one feeling the pain. And so we enter into the pain of the one we love. Psalm 69:9, the psalmist says, "Zeal for your house has eaten me up and the reproaches of those who approach Thee have fallen on me." In other words, when God is dishonored, says David, I feel the pain.

Now let me take it a step further. I believe this love is also a love that loves what God loves. Alright? It is a love that loves what God loves. Listen to Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Thy law." Verse 72: "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Verse 103: "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth." And when you love God you will love what God loves, and what does God love? God says, "I have exalted My Word above all My name." God loves His Word and the one who loves God also loves His Word. So it is a love that loves what God loves.

Now let me tell you another thing. It is a love that loves whom God loves. Alright? It is a love that loves whom God loves. Go to 1 John 5, marvelous passage. First John chapter 5, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Now listen to the next statement. "And everyone that loves Him that begot (that is God) loves Him also that is begotten of Him. And by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments." Now here He says when you are a child of God you will love God and you will keep His commandments and you will love those He has begotten. So it is the love that loves the people that God loves. And may I say conversely it is a love that hates what God hates. It is a love that hates what God hates. It is a love that cannot tolerate evil, sin, anymore than God can because it is so inextricably intertwined with God Himself. It is a love that grieves over sin. You remember Matthew 26:75? It says that after Peter was confronted with his sin and alerted to the fact that he had denied the Lord he went out and did what? He wept bitterly, he wept bitterly. So it a love, on the negative side, it is a love that grieves over sin. It is a love that rejects the world. First John 2 says, "Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So in loving the Father we do not love the world.

And I guess I could add one more before we get to the last one. It is a love that longs for Christ's return. I mean if you really love God, if you really love the Savior, you're going to be longing for His return. Second Timothy 4:8 says there's a special crown awaiting "all them that love His appearing."

Now let me summarize this. I've given you a lot of verses tonight. I'm going to pull it all together. Now watch carefully what we've been saying. When the apostle Paul in Romans 8 identifies believers, he identifies them as those whose unique characteristic is they love God. As you examine what that means in Scripture you find that it is nothing more than a title given to those who are the children of God, those who are the redeemed. They are marked out as those who love God.

They do not love God as much as they should, but they love God much, and a true believer will love God on these terms: He will love God so that he desires to meditate on God's majestic glory, he will love God so that he trusts in God's great power to hold him, he will love God so that he seeks communion with God, he will love God so that he is secured in his soul and at peace. It is a love that also is sensitive to God's feelings and he is grieved in God being dishonored. It is a love also that loves what God loves, His law, His holy Word. It is a love that loves whom He loves, other of his children. It is a love that hates what God hates. It is a love that grieves over sin. It is a love that rejects the world and it is a love that longs for the coming of Jesus Christ, to them that love God, to them that love God. True believers love God like that. Much!

But there's one other and this is the overarching quality of all qualities. It is a love that obeys God's commands. It is a love that obeys God's commands. That is the most essential mark of this love. In John's gospel it is said so clearly in chapter 14 verse 21, "He that hath my commandments and keeps them he it is that loves Me." There it is. John 14:21 defines Romans 8. Who are the ones that love Him? The ones that keep His commandments.

Now beloved all true Christians, then, are lovers of God whose heart's desire is to know God, to glorify God, to commune with God, and to obey God, to obey God. We don't obey as we ought, but that's our desire. We may find ourselves in Romans chapter 7 saying, "In my inward man I delight in the law of God." We may be saying I want to do what's right, I long to glorify God, I desire to please His name, I desire to commune with Him, and in ourselves we see what Paul saw, our humanness, our flesh standing in the way. It may be a battle for us, but you show me a person and the desire isn't there and I'll show you a person who isn't redeemed. For the believer loves God, even though he may fail.

Can a man, on his own, generate that? Are we saying to people now come on love God. Come on stir it up. No because the unregenerate are characterized, as we saw in Exodus 20:5, and also in Deuteronomy also Proverbs 8:36, as those who hate God. How do you go from being a hater of God to being a lover of God? How do you make that transition? How can one who is hating God and manifesting that hate by disobedience to His commandment and no longing to glorify God and no longing to commune with God, and no longing to obey God, how do you transform one like that? You just ask him to get his life together on his own? One who is at enmity with God, one who is a bitter rival of God for supremacy in his own life, one who is cut off from God, who is ignorant, in darkness, hopeless as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2, one who, according to Romans chapter 3, can't do good not matter what he tries. Opens his mouth and all you get is poison coming out. How does this person, who is a hater of God, become a lover of God?

Now let me just point up, folks, that when we say there are only two kinds of people in the world

that's exactly what the Bible is saying: the lovers of God and the haters of God. And it's hard for people, I think, who are unregenerate to see themselves as haters of God, particularly religious people. But you define the love-hate relationship to God by one term and that is obedience to His word. And lovers of God are those who keep His commandments and haters of God are those who don't. And as I said, we who are Christians keep His commandments. We love Him much. We may not keep them all the time or as often as we should, but that's the burning desire of our heart, restrained by our humanness so often.

But how can these men who are dead in trespasses and sin, how can these people who are locked into ignorance and darkness, who hate God ever be turned around to love God? Well if you look at Romans 8:28, the answer comes in the next phrase. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called," to them who are the called. What a tremendous statement. This, dear friends, listen, is the divine initiative that brings about the transformation. We didn't decide one day that we who hated God would love Him. We didn't have that resource in our fallenness. But God decided that we who hated him would love Him by His own call to us. It's really summed up, I think, as clearly as any place in 1 John 5:19, which says — you don't need to turn to it, just listen — "We loved Him (What?) because He (What?) first loved us." We love Him. That's the mark of a Christian. That's the identifying mark of a Christian, but we do that because He first set His love on us, so very critical that we understand that. The only way we could ever love God was for God to love us first. He had to take the initiation, very, very clear truth given in the Scripture.

Now with just that in mind I want you to look at Matthew 22:14, because I need to touch base with this passage so you won't be confused. In Matthew 22:14 the statement is made, "Many are called but few are chosen." "Many are called but few are chosen." Now what that means, and the parable here and the passage, as we shall see in a few weeks when we get to that passage, tells us about a call for people to come to the Lord. And the term called there has to do with an external invitation. Many people are under the hearing of the gospel. Many people are given an invitation to come, but only a few are chosen. A lot of people hear the external call, a few are chosen to the internal call. And again we mark in our minds, keep it there, that the gate is narrow and the way is narrow and the word is few, few, few. And so few are chosen. Many hear the call.

Now the call there in Matthew 14...or Matthew 22:14, is an external call and I just wanted you to know that and it's clear from the parable before, if you study that. But when you move from the gospel record into the epistles, and you see the word "called" it never is used in the epistles to apply again to an external call. It always applies to an internal call. What's the difference you say? The external call is simply someone sitting, hearing the gospel, hearing an invitation come to Christ. The internal call is God moving into that heart, choosing that person, turning their heart around and redeeming them. And though in that occasion in Matthew it is an external call that is in mind and it's a proper and perfect use of the term, when you get to the epistles you find that now the call has to do with what theologians call an effectual or an effective call, that the ones He calls He redeems. And in case you wonder about that, now look at Romans 8 again and see it there.

Verse 30, "Moreover whom He did predestinate them He also called." Now watch this: "And whom He called them He also, what, justified." Now you know you're not dealing with an external call. You're dealing with an internal one. You're talking about the chosen, predestined, the elect, and them that He called He justified, and those justified He glorified.

So you find the call, then, in the epistles is an effectual call. Go over to chapter 9 of Romans, verse 11, as we continue in our study and you will read there the statement, "for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calls." And here again is the effectual call of God, His divine purpose, His choosing.

Now listen, beloved, I don't want you to get blown away by this, but the reason you love God is because He first loved you and the reason you have come to Him is because He first came to you, and the reason you responded is because He turned your heart around, so that salvation is initiated by God. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to like to say, "God interferes with our life." And He interferes with our life rather significantly. This is the divine act that initiates salvation, and not only initiates it, but brings it all the way to completion, all the way from fore-ordination, predestination, calling, justification to glorification. Now people say, "You mean you believe in predestination?" Of course it's in the Bible. How could you not believe it? And election is in the Bible. And being called is in the Bible. It's all in verse 30, 29 and 30. You can't not believe in it. You can try to explain it away, but you can't not believe it. We are saved because He called us.

Now hang on to this, people. First Corinthians 1 says, "Paul called to be an apostle." You say, "No, he came to Christ on his own." Oh? Walking down the Damascus Road one day on his way to killing Christians and the next thing you knew he's ordained and put in the ministry? He had little to do with it. All he did was get up off the ground. And then it says in verse 2, "Unto the church of God, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints." The called again. It is a call that is effective. Verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 1: "But unto them who are called both Jew and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Listen friend, if you are a Christian it is because God called you. Now if you ask me why he picked you out of the crowd, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know why He picked me, but what is darkness to my intellect is sunshine to my heart. And you have the same thing all throughout the epistles. Ephesians 1 verse 11: "In whom also we have an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will." Boy that is so clear; predestinated after the counsel of His own will.

Philippians 3, "Paul says I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was called to the race, to run for the prize. He even says in verse 12, "That I was apprehended by Christ Jesus." Isn't that great? I was arrested. First Thessalonians 2:13, "For this cause, also, thank we God without ceasing because when you received the word of God, which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God." How come? How come you received it as the word of God? "Which effectually works also in you that believe." Power of God! Second Timothy 1:9, "Who has 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."

Now listen, people, I'm going to tell you why this is important in a moment. You were called before the world began in God's mind and plan. You and I are the called from eternity past. Tremendous truth! Now listen, the point is this. If in eternity past He called us, then He called us then that He might glorify us in eternity future, right? So there can't be any loss and we're right back to what the verse is saying. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Why? Because they are the what? The called, and whom He called He justified. And whom He justified He what? He glorified. We've been called to glory, you see.

Verse 29 says it. We've been called to be predestined to the conformity of the image of His Son. That's what we're called to and we're not complete until we're like Christ, right? See in eternity past God laid it down that John MacArthur would someday be in the image of Jesus Christ. That's right, in eternity He decided that John MacArthur someday would be in the image of Jesus Christ, would be like Him, see Him as He is, and He's working that out, and there can be no loss, you see. That's why Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I have lost none of them." You can't, you can't. That's the plan.

Now how does God call us? How does He call us? By His word and His Spirit, by His word and His Spirit. Romans 10 says, "Faith comes by hearing a speech about Jesus Christ." Faith comes by hearing a speech about Jesus Christ. You say, "Can you be called and saved without hearing that?" No. I know some people teach you can be saved and not know it. I don't believe that. This is sort of hyper-Calvinism you know, where you're saved and don't know it. I mean you're so effectually called that you haven't got the information yet. I don't see that in the Scripture at all. Faith, saving faith, Romans 10:14, comes by hearing a speech about Christ. You got to have the facts. That's part of it, and then by His Spirit. By His Word and by His Spirit we're born again says 1 Peter 1, by the Spirit. We're born again by the Spirit. The Spirit comes, in John 16 it says, "And convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment." The Spirit comes and recreates us. We're baptized, placed into the body of Christ, in the Spirit of God.

So the Spirit is the agent of new birth. First Peter 1:22 and 23, the word is the information. So you have the information: the Word; the agent: the Spirit. So we see then, the extent of this incredible security is that all things are working together ultimately for our good. God just overrules all evil things and keeps moving us toward glory, keeps moving us toward glory because we're the called. And if we are the called it will mark our lives that we are those who love God, and we love Him enough to long to be with Him, to long to commune with Him, to love His Word, to love His people, and to desire to obey. That marks us out.

Now let's talk for a moment about the source of security and this is very simple, the end of verse 28, "according to His purpose." That's the source. You see, you couldn't get yourself saved; you can't keep yourself saved. It was all in God's plan. He has to save you and He has to keep you. "According to His" is implied, and it really is implied, it really belongs there, it is His purpose and view, according to His purpose. He is the source, He is the one who before the foundation of the world decided to set His love upon a certain people.

Ephesians 1:4, says, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless." You get that? He chose us to ultimate holiness. He chose us to ultimate blamelessness and He'll get us there. You understand that? He'll get us there. It's all God's plan.

Back in Deuteronomy 6, we can illustrate from the case of Israel, rather Deuteronomy 7 verse 6 and 7, "For thou art a holy people under the Lord thy God." You think they were a holy people in reality? Israel? Hardly! But they were set apart. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee above all people who are on the face of the earth." You say why? Like Richard Wolf said one time, "How odd of God to choose the Jews." I don't know why. No one knows why. God knows. But verse 7 says, "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the least of all people, but because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to you fathers hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and

redeemed you out of the house of bondage." You know why God redeemed you? Because He has to be true to His predetermined will and purpose. And if God ever lost one person along the path then He wouldn't have kept His original promise and His own covenant with Himself. And God can't lie, so we are secure in the purpose of God. That's the source. That's why John 1:13 says, "We were born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." But of God. That is the supreme guarantee of glory, friends. I mean that's it. It's in His divine, eternal purpose. Oh what a plan!

So, "all things work together for good." Nothing can stand in the way of that. We're just moving toward glory. You say, "Who does that apply to?" Them that love God. Who are they? Oh they're the ones who have in their heart's deepest desire the longing to commune with God, to glorify God, to obey God and even though they fall short, it's their heart's desire. That's the group that this promise belongs to. But how do you get to be like that. I mean, how do you get in that group? Oh you have to be, what, called. That's right. God has to predetermine to set His love upon you.

Now I don't understand the mystery of that. I just know it's what He says. You say, "Well how does He know who to do that to?" Oh it's according to His what? His purpose established before the world began. He predetermined to do that. Someday you can ask Him why. I don't know if you'll get an answer. But we don't know. I'll tell you something wonderful. You say, "Well, what if He changes His mind?. What if He gets me halfway through and says, 'I made a mistake? This guy's not worth the trouble.'" Here's a little hope for you, Romans 11:29. Romans 11:29 says, are you ready for this? "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." What does that mean? What does repentance mean? Change. Turn around, go the other direction, change your mind. A calling of God can never be changed. Never.

Well no wonder the psalmist said in Psalm 4 verse 8, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep." I think I'll go to bed. "For Thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety." No wonder Deuteronomy 33 says, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun (or the God of Israel) who rides on the heaven in Thy help and in His excellency on the sky, the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms."

You read Psalm 91, the great comfort psalm and see how God preserves. Read Psalm 139, and see how He upholds His people. And so the truth of that verse penetrates our hearts, "All things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose."

Can I just conclude with the fourth point? Very brief, now listen to it. The certainty, we left out three words in our discussion, first three in the verse. What are they? And we, what? Know. We do? Yeah we do. You say, "How do we know?" I just told you. That's why I kept it to the end. We know because of Scripture. I don't think it's mystical intuition. We know because of Scripture. Divine revelation tells us that all things are working together for our ultimate good and that's what we've been telling you these last two Lord's Day evenings. All of this Scripture says it's so. And it grieves my heart to think about how many Christians never can exist in the incredible rest that comes to those who know their salvation is eternal just because they don't know the Scripture. And they can go around spouting this verse but they can't really say, "And we know," unless they do know and the only way you can know is Scripture.

Now is it any wonder that in verse 31 Paul launched into praise? Is it any wonder? Listen, I want to close with this thought. All things do work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose, and you want to know the supreme illustration of that? I'm just going to

close with this. The supreme illustration of that, in all of the eons of time, the supreme illustration of that is the death of Jesus Christ. The worst thing that ever happened in human history, the worst thing any person ever did turned out to be the best thing that ever happened. And that's how God works to overrule everything for our ultimate good and glory.

Father, we thank you tonight that we've been again brought into the great truth of your Word. And we desire Lord that we might be obedient, that we might be those who love You and our love might abound more and more. Father, if there are any in our fellowship tonight who are outside Christ, who are haters of God, though they would not testify to that, by virtue of disobedience, by virtue of rejection of Christ, they are accursed. For in 1 Corinthians 16:22, it says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." And so, Lord, if there's anyone here who does not love you, who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ with a love that seeks Your glory, with a love that seeks Your fellowship, with a love that seeks Your word and Your will and Your way, with a love that longs to obey even though it falls so short. Father, as some examine their hearts they don't see that love, O God we ask in the blessed working of the Spirit that He may call their hearts to salvation, to believing. And Father, we have to say also, that the Scripture tells us that if they reject they bear the consequence. We don't understand how those two things harmonize, but we know that's what Scripture says, so we pray Lord, that in that heart that does not yet know Christ, that does not yet love God, there may be the awakening of that love as the Spirit prompts the heart. And there might be also the fear of rejection, lest in not loving the Lord Jesus Christ they should be accursed.

And then Father, for those of us who know You, who love You, You know our hearts like You know Peter. And You knew that he loved You even when he was disobedient. You knew that and he called on that. He said You know everything, You know I love You. And You know we do too, Father, even though sometimes it isn't outwardly visible. And You know we long to do Your Word and to live it out, to obey Your commandments even though our flesh causes us to fail. Help us to abound more in love toward You, to grow to love You more deeply more widely, more truly. And Lord, thank you so much for the absolutely thrilling promise of this verse, that we who love You are on the way to glory, because You called us to that and nothing can change it. So everything ultimately works together to bring about that eternal glory. Oh what a hopeful thing to realize. Father, do Your work in all of our hearts and we just thank you so much for the great wonder of what we've learned. We bless Your name. I thank you for this precious people, for the wonderful, wonderful way they respond to Your word, for the great encouragement it is to my own heart that they're here tonight in great numbers to feed on what You have to say. Father, bless them in proportion to their commitment that they may know the fullness of joy and we'll thank you in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).