

## **The Extent of Christian Invincibility**

Romans 8:28

80-253

Well I think it's obvious to everybody that there is a great amount of fear in our world today. We are on a high level of security. Security seems to be the buzz word. Everybody's concerned about security. We have always had in our government those who were in charge of our security against foreign enemies and now we have a new office of Homeland Security. There is heightened everywhere you turn. When you go to the airport you wind up in long long lines over security. We went the other day to the Rose Bowl football game we were amazed at the screening and the security even just to get into a stadium like that. This security, of course, shows up in all public life as we do the best we can to secure ourselves from those who threaten our safety.

There are not only those individual fears that are somewhat alleviated by security, but there's corporate and even national security fears, the fear encroachment upon us through germ warfare, whether it's smallpox or anthrax or whatever it might be, some kind of chemical agent that can destroy us in massive numbers.

All kinds of things can threaten our lives. We are threatened not only by those things which can harm us physically, we are threatened and have been threatened for a long long time by those things that destroy the soul and we have virtually nothing to secure ourselves against that. The flood of filth, the flood of pornography, and the flood of sin depicted in the media continues unabated and unrestrained and unrestricted, as in the name of openness and freedom we have tolerated the pollution of our entire society essentially turning the airwaves into a sewer. We do little about that security. Parents are fearful of what might be the future for their children, people are fearful of what might be the future for the generations that come after us, pastors are fearful of what might happen to the church, even believers are fearful about the influences around them and how they can stand against some of those things.

We live in a time when there is a huge amount of insecurity. There is false doctrine rampant in the land and propagated at a level never before. Because of media now lies and false teachers can be ubiquitous, they can be in front of our face 24 hours a day on the television set or through some other form of media. And so it's a time when people are conscious about security.

And questions are being asked about where the world is going and what is the future for the world? What is the future for the church? There are people who are saying the church is being threatened. I remember reading in one of George Barna's books that he said if the church didn't change its strategy in 50 years it would be out of existence. Are we facing the extinction of the church? And is it true that Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world that now claims 1.2 billion adherents is slowly, or maybe not so slowly, taking over the world and that what the Muslims don't get the Mormons might? Is it true as we look at these kinds of things that Christianity has a bleak future? Is the Lord Jesus being squeezed out of human history? And what about my own life what's in store for me in

this insecure world?

Could be that my testimony for Jesus Christ is becoming more and more unacceptable and I realize right now that it's in to talk about God? I realize right now it's okay to believe in God, but this too shall pass. And once things subside a little bit those anti-God forces in our society who are quietly waiting in the wings for the acceptable moment to step back in the public eye will do so.

What is the future for the church? What is the future for the world? What is the future for me as a believer? And all that raising so many questions and I admit that many of these questions don't come from us because you're aware of these issues and you know what the word of God teaches. But everywhere I go I am really amazed that how many Christian people struggle with an understanding of both their individual security, the security or the future of the church and where the world itself is going. So I thought I might well for us to take a look at some of those issues and a good place to start is with our own personal security as believers.

And so I want to talk about Christian invincibility. I like that word. It's a bold word. It's a confident word, but I think it's an accurate word. I think as Christians we are invincible. I think that's true on an individual level and I think it's true on a church wide level. Jesus said I'll build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. So we don't have to worry about the church going out of existence. And when Jesus left this earth he said that he would come again in like manner as you'd seen him go he would come again. And he will come again and be the culmination of history so we know where history is going and we know where the church is going and we can also know what our future is.

And to direct us to that thought I want you to open your Bible to the 8th Chapter of Romans. And let's sort of start with us at this point as we look at this matter of security and this is one of the great great chapters in all of Scripture. We have so many new people in our church no matter how many times and it's only been a couple through the years that I would teach this chapter. There would be need probably every year to go back and teach its immense truths.

But I want you to look at Romans Chapter 8 and the starting point for us is in verse 31. We're going to be looking at verses 28 and following, but the launch point is verse 31. "What shall we say to these things? If God is for us who is against us?" Now that second statement is the focus of my attention. If God is for us who is against us? Now this in the Greek is an interesting statement. You will notice the two times is appears it is in italics. That means it's not in the original. There are no verbs here. There are no verbs.

Now if you know anything about the Greek language, or for that matter any language, you know that verbs convey action in some paradigm of time. There are past tense verbs and present tense verbs and future tense verbs. There are perfect verbs and what we call imperfect verbs. They all convey some kind of time. When we parse the Greek language we talk about verbs in terms of whether they are past, present or future, whether they speak about punctillier point action or duration of action because verbs, while conveying action, convey action in a frame of time as they do in every language including English.

But here there are no verbs. The sentence actually says: if God for us who against us? Without regard for time, without regard for the past, without regard for the present, without regard for he

future, without regard whatsoever this is a fixed and permanent reality. It is timeless. If God for us who against us? And the word if here is not the appropriate way to translate this if you want to capture the meaning. Because what you have here is a little conditional particle. It's two letters e and i in English. It is the conditional particle of a fulfilled condition and the accurate way to translate it is because or since. Let's read it that way: because God for us who against us, or since God for us who against us. Now what the Apostle is saying here is since God is for us who can successfully be against us? And the answer, of course, is implied, nobody. God is God and there's only one God and God being the almighty supreme ruler of the universe, if he is for us then no one can successfully be against us.

And therein lies the condition of our invincibility. In Genesis 15:1 we read that, "The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, 'Do not fear Abram, I am a shield to you.'" Who would he fear if the Almighty Creator God of the universe was his protector who could be a successful antagonist? No one! Joshua and Caleb went into the Promised Land in Numbers 14, they came back out, and you remember the ten spies said don't go there, right, we'll never be able to survive. There are giants in the land, we can't conquer the Canaanites, but Joshua and Caleb came back in Numbers 14:9, they said, "The Lord is with us. Do not fear them." Well that's Romans 8:31. Because the Lord is for us who can successfully be against us.

You find similar testimony to the invincibility of God's people in the Psalms. And I don't want to go through all of them that deal with this, but I do want to point you to a few. Look at Psalm 27 for a moment, because this is very encouraging language. Psalm 27, and it puts it in much the same kind of question format as the Lord for us who against us is a question, here's another one. Psalm 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life, whom shall I dread." Or as the author says, "Of whom shall I be afraid.?" If Jehovah, if God almighty is my light, my salvation and my defender who do I fear?

Verse 2. "When evil doers came upon me to devour my flesh my adversaries, my enemies they stumbled and fell; though a host encamp against me my heart will not fear; though war arise against me in spite of this I shall be confident." Doesn't matter whether it's a single enemy, doesn't matter whether it's a host, it doesn't matter whether it's a nation warring against me I am confident in the Lord.

In verse 5 he says, "In the day of trouble he'll conceal me in his tabernacle; in a secret place of his tent he'll hide me; he'll lift me up on a rock; my head will be lifted above my enemies around me; I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes I will sing praises to the Lord." The Psalmist is saying it really doesn't matter what happens, doesn't matter whether it's an individual, doesn't matter whether it's a small group, doesn't matter whether it's a nation coming against in a war, it doesn't matter. The Lord is my defender and if he is for me then who can successfully be against me?

Looking a little further into the Psalms, you might want to note Psalm 46. This too is one of those wonderful Psalms of confidence. Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, and though the mountains slip into the hearth of the sea, though it's waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride." He's talking here about changes in the geography, changes in the topography of the earth. He's talking about natural disasters no matter how severe they might be.

We out here are somewhat familiar with earthquakes. People in other parts of the country are familiar with floods and some are familiar with hurricanes and so it goes, but in all of that whether it's an actual human enemy as in Psalm 27 or whether it's a natural disaster as in Psalm 46, God is our refuge and strength. We have nothing to fear.

Verse 7 repeats it. "The Lord of hosts is with us. The Lord of hosts is with us." God is on our side. The God of Jacob is our stronghold. He repeats it again in verse 11. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our stronghold." And maybe a Psalm that is almost totally devoted to the same theme is Psalm 91. Turn to Psalm 91.

In fact the subtitle of this one in my Bible is the security of the one who trusts in the Lord. This is the Psalm of security. "He who dwells," Psalm 91, "in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty." That is under the protection of God. "I will say to the Lord, my refuge, my fortress; my God in whom I trust. He delivers you from the snare of the trapper, from the deadly pestilence; he covers you with his pinions under his wings you may see refuge like a great bird hovering over the little ones, by his faithfulness provides a shield and a bulwark or a great defense. You will not be afraid of the terror by night, the arrow that flies by day, the pestilence that stalks in darkness, the destruction that lays waste at noon."

People may be dropping all around you, a thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand may fall at your right hand, they may come down in a myriad of ways, but they'll never be able to touch you. Only with your eyes will you see the wicked being destroyed because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place. No evil will befall you; no plague will come near your tent. He will give his angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways, bear you up in their hands, they will lest you strike your foot against a stone. You'll tread on the lion, the cobra, young lion, serpent you'll trample." Vivid imagery of a triumphant secure person no matter what the threat might be.

And the reason, verse 14, "Because he has loved me, therefore will I deliver him, says God. I will set him securely on high because he has known my name, he will call on me, I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him," and of course for us that's eternal life, "and I'll let him behold my salvation." This again is the same kind of promise. There is great security to the one who belongs to the Lord. If the Lord is for us who against us?

I want you to look at Isaiah Chapter 40 also. I want to familiarize you with these portions of Scripture because they are so encouraging to us. Verse 27, "It may seem O Jacob, it may seem O Israel that your way is hidden from the Lord." That things are going bad and the Lord doesn't know. And the justice that is due to you escapes the notice of my God. It may be that you think things are going so bad that the disaster is looming so formidably on the horizon and it's becoming so close that God must not know. Your way must be hidden from him, escaping his notice. Verse 28, "Do you not know, have you not heard? The everlasting, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth has not become weary or tired and his understanding is inscrutable." That means he understands everything. "He gives strength to the weary, to him who lacks might increase his power. Though youths grow weary and tired and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait on the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." In other words, the Lord will provide the infused strength into his people to protect them from what threatens them. All of these and many other passages tell us that God is for us the great Creator God he is for us.

I John 4:4 adds a note to that. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The great God who is for us, this is the amazing thing, lives within us. What a marvelous truth that is. The great God who is for us has taken up residence in us. We have become the temple of God, the temple of the Spirit of God. He dwells within us.

Now let's go back to Romans Chapter 8. After that look at some comparative Scriptures that remind us that God is for us. If we trust in him he is for us and if he is for us who against us? This then is the statement of Christian invincibility. This is the proposition that is the center of this passage. Now Paul develops around that statement two lines of reasoning: one is positive and one is negative.

The positive appears in verses 28 to 30. And verses 28 to 30, familiar verses to us, show positively that all things God lovingly works in his eternal plan for our good. That's the positive. God works all things together for good. That's the positive. The negative is in verses 31 to 39. Nothing can work in any way by any means to thwart that plan. So positively verses 28 to 30 God is working it to our good. Negatively nothing can hinder that plan verses 31 to 39.

All of this builds the case for that high point statement if God for us who against us? If everything is working for our good and nothing can work against it then that supports that great statement. No matter what goes wrong in the world, no matter how bleak the scene might become morally, spiritually, economically, militarily, no matter how dire our circumstances might be, and we in this American civilization at this time don't know what it is to live in dire circumstances, but no matter what the future might hold for us or other believers around the world, no matter how tough life gets economically, marritally, socially, physically, whatever no matter, nothing, nothing can successfully defeat us since God is for us.

Now for tonight let's look at the positive side of this, verses 28 to 30. This is an oft-quoted verse, an oft-quoted passage that does have some very profound significance and I'll see if we can't get an understanding of it. Verses 28 to 30. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And whom he predestined these also called, and whom he called these he also justified, and whom he justified these he also glorified." That is so crammed with theology that one could write a 500-page book on those three verses and not exhaust them. It's amazing what's here. It's a promise of Christian invincibility.

God has determined, predetermined, predestined that we will be glorified and therefore, everything that happens works together to that end. That is to say, our eternal glory is fixed; it is unalterable. It cannot be changed. So we have in those three verses the statement of our security. And I want to break it down into four components: the extent of security, the recipients of security, the source of security and the certainty of security. Extent, recipients, source, and security! Those are just words to help you sort through the material a little bit.

Let's talk about the extent of security. How secure are we? How invincible are we as believers? Now remember when you get into Romans 8 we've already gone through the gospel, we've already been identified as those, that you heard earlier in the testimony who've rejected law as a means of salvation, we've embraced grace, nobody can be saved by the deeds of the law, as you heard

quoted from Romans 3. Paul says by the deeds of the law no flesh are going to be justified. Salvation comes through faith and grace alone. We know that so now we've come through the gospel, we've embraced the gospel, believed in Christ, the Spirit of God has come into our lives, at the beginning of Chapter 8. All of Chapter 8 up to verse 27 points out the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit as he effects the purpose of God in the believer. Having then had the work of justification and the work of sanctification become reality in our lives, we now enter into the position of being secure. We are those that God is for, against which no one can be successful.

But let's talk about the extent of this security, very simple, verse 28. We know that God causes all things to work together for good. The extent is all things. This security embraces everything that happens to us. Frankly I don't know of a statement in the Bible that could contribute more hope, more happiness, more freedom, more joy, more confidence, and more security than that.

As you go through the pain of life, as you go through the problems of life, as you go through the disappointments of life, not only that other people disappoint you, but you disappointing the Lord and you know it, as you go through the struggle with your own sins and your own failures and you go through all that, and you see all that is going on around you, and all that's going on in you, and you come back to this all things work together for good, that has to be the consummate statement of good news. All things, poncau, it's a comprehensive term and the context puts no limits. There's nothing in this text to limit that. All things!

II Corinthians 4:15, Paul says, "All things are for your sake," and he doesn't limit it. I Corinthians 3:21,22, Paul says, "That in Jesus Christ all things belong to you." Romans 8 tells us again in verse 32 that, "In Christ who was delivered up for us all, he has given us with him all things." There are no limits on any of these. The all things we receive in Jesus Christ are all the things that God has placed within salvation. The all things that belong to us in Christ is the same. And the all things that Paul referred to when he said all things are for your sake is the same as well.

Everything that God places within the scope of salvation is ours. And this verse says, everything that happens in our lives God works into that saving purpose. No limits! Whatever might be the extent of the issues of our life, whatever might come our way, whatever might be the number of things that come our way, whatever might be the intensity of those things, whatever the overwhelming of trouble or disappointment, whatever it is that comes into our lives they all work together for good.

Now the obvious opposite of that is that nothing that happens to you works together for bad. It's amazing. Work together is the Greek verb sinergay, from which we get synergy, which simply means work together. God takes everything that happens in your life and weaves it together. Psalm 25:10, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant." The only things that ever happens in the life of a believer is a saving effect. It doesn't matter what it is. It contributes in the weaving together to the saving purpose of God. All his paths are mercy. All his paths are truth to those who keep his covenant.

Now let me just talk about this a little bit. All things are not necessarily in themselves good. We know that, but God weaves them into good, agathon. Here, yes, and in glory as well, but here first of all. The word here for good, agathon, from which you get the old name of your old aunt Agatha, it refers to what is morally good. There's another word for good, calas, which tends to refer to what is apparently good, what looks good. What has outward beauty or goodness. This is that sort of intrinsic goodness. Calas appeals to the eye. Agathos appeals to the moral sense.

So God takes everything that happens in your life, you're his, and weaves it together to produce something that is truly good, not superficially good but really good. It may not seem that way now; it may not seem that way when it's happening, but that's where God is taking it. You know this in Genesis 50, the wonderful verse that says, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." And those things, which men mean as the severest kind of evil God works together for the purest, truest good.

How does God work this out? Well go back for a moment to verse 26. We don't know how to pray as we should. We couldn't pray our way into turning things around. If we were to say well I want everything to turn out good in my life so I'm going to just kind of pray that it'll all turn out good. I'm just going to try to find a prayer path somewhere. Maybe I can pray the prayer of Jabez and it'll all work out, but I need to find some way to pray this thing into goodness or this thing could be bad. I need to find a prayer path here to work it out.

Well we don't even know how to pray. He tells us that. We don't know how to pray because we don't know the purposes of God. We don't know what the spiritual forces are doing in the world and with us. We don't know what God has in mind. We don't understand sovereign purpose. We can't understand the future. We can't anticipate what's going to happen so we're sort of out here floating along without any ability to really make bad things good. We couldn't even find a prayer path to affect that as if prayer itself could make things good that otherwise would be bad. We don't know how to pray that way. But, this is a great statement at the end of verse 26; the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the life of a believer. At the point of salvation the Holy Spirit came to live in you. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the third member of the Trinity literally resides in you. You're the temple of the Holy Spirit and one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to carry on constant intercession before God, and he intercedes with groanings too deep for words. Some people have said that means speaking in tongues. Not hardily. It doesn't say that you are making unintelligible noises. It says the Holy Spirit is interceding with groanings too deep for words.

What you have is the Holy Spirit interceding passionately silently before the throne of God on your behalf. And he, verse 27, "God who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." You know why things work together for good? First of all, because you have living in you the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the divine Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is constantly interceding for you before the throne of God with passionate longing groanings for your well being and God who knows the heart and knows the mind of the Spirit knows that the Spirit is interceding according to the will of God.

God then wills that everything work for good and the Spirit then prays interceding constantly for us that that is exactly what will happen. So you have this wonderful agreement within the Trinity. The Father's will that it all work together for good, the Spirit's interceding that it all work together for good, though Paul doesn't deal with it here, you can add the intercession of the Son who sits at the right hand of the Father constantly interceding for us, and seeing the same good out of all the assorted experiences and events of our lives.

Now when it says all things, it means all things. That doesn't have any limits. Some people want to

limit that to suffering or to pain. Verse 18 talks about suffering. But it's not limited in this context. Let me just define it a little more. First of all, good things work for our good. Good things work for our good. This is obvious, it should be, but it could stand a little bit of emphasis so let me give it a little.

What do we mean good things work together for good? Well the puritan Thomas Watson suggests a number of good things that work to our good. First of all, God's nature works for our good. God's nature works for our good. We could start with the interceding work of the compassionate Holy Spirit. We could add to that God's power. God's power works for our good why? Because God's power supports us in the trouble. God's power protects us in the troubles, we read in Psalm 26, Psalm 46, Psalm 91. Underneath are the everlasting arms as Deuteronomy 33. Paul says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Well who makes that strength perfect? God does. God's nature is not a good thing; God is the best thing. God is goodness in his nature. He is perfect goodness and his goodness works for our good expressed in his power.

Secondly expressed in his wisdom. He says he will guide us with his truth and he does. His mercy. God's mercy is with us all the time. His faithfulness is new every morning. Paul even says in Romans 2 that his goodness leads us. So if you want to talk about good things, talk about the best, that is God and realize that God's involvement in our lives is the best of things and that works together for our good. God's very presence; God's very nature.

Also God's promises work for our good. He's given us, Peter says, II Peter 1:4, precious promises. These precious promises is goodness for the soul. When guilt comes we remember that the Lord is merciful and gracious as Exodus says. We remember that he keeps mercy for thousands and when disobedience comes into our lives we remember that Hosea said that God would heal the backsliding of his people. We remember that Micah said, "Who is pardoning God like you?" When trouble comes we remember Psalm 91:51, "I will be with him in trouble." Psalm 37, "I will be a strength to him in time of trouble." When deprivation comes we remember that God has promised all our needs in his riches in Christ. We remember that David said in Psalm 37, "Again I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." So the very nature of God in the sense of his presence, his power, his wisdom, his goodness is a good thing that works to our good.

His precious promises are another good thing that work to our good. And certainly the truth of his word would be a third general category that works to our good. It is the word of his grace, Paul said in Acts that builds us up and gives us an inheritance among all that are sanctified. We could add prayer.

Prayer works for our good. That's a good thing. "Effectual fervent prayer of a righteous produces much," James says. Angels work for our good. Hebrews 1:14 says, "Angels are ministering spirits sent to minister to the saints. Matthew 18:10 talks about their angels that is our angels always beholding the face of the Father so they can pick up his concern and come on behalf of his concern to our aid.

Other believers work for our good. II Corinthians 1:24 Paul says, "We are all helpers of your joy." Hebrews 10:24, "We stimulate one another to love and good works." We pray for one another. We admonish one another, etc. etc. etc. So good things work for our good. And what are those good things? God, the best of all. His word, angels, saints, prayer, promises, all of those things are the good things that work for our good. Perhaps more instructively at this point is to consider the bad things that work for our good. Bad things do work for our good because all things work for our good.

God has to overrule the bad things.

Let me just give you sort of three categories of bad things. First of all suffering, suffering. I know it's not a popular thing to suffer and that's reasonable. Nobody chooses to suffer for the sake of the suffering, although you might well choose to suffer for the sake of the benefit. I know in my own life the times of the greatest suffering in my life have been the times of the greatest spiritual blessing. But suffering is a bad thing. It's an effective sin. It's an effective fallen ness. But God works it to good.

Ruth 1:21 expresses the understanding of that. "The almighty has afflicted me." And there's not a resignation to that, as if it's a sort of bitter acceptance, but rather there's a sense of purpose in this. Job said, "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." He accepted his suffering at the hand of God. And suffering was a great teacher to Job. He had heard about God, he said. Now having suffered he had seen him with his eye and learned what it was to really repent. In Jeremiah 24:5, Jeremiah writes, "Like these good things so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive in Judah of whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Caldeans," listen to this, "for their good." That's pretty tough to swallow. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, receives a message from God that we was sending the people into the captivity in Babylon for their good. That's exactly what happened. They were purged from idolatry by their suffering.

So our suffering, whether it's for chastening, or whether it's not, refines us, humbles us. That's why James says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials." Why? Because this suffering has a positive effect. A perfect result, he calls it, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. Faith produces spiritual maturity, spiritual perfection. It's there that you learn humility, trust, compassion, patience, gentleness, grace, tenderness and many examples of the goodness of God coming out of suffering in the Bible. Joseph's brothers throw him into a pit, sell him as a slave, he winds up in prison, but it all worked together for good to him, to his brothers, to God's redemptive plan.

Manasseh was chained but it was for his good, II Chronicles says, "Because when he was in affliction he besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly and the Lord responded to him," II Chronicles 33:11-12. Sometimes as chastening it produces good. Job lost everything that he had, if you remember, received ulcers, boils, catastrophe without parallel and he saw it all as the beginning of the kind of goodness that he never would have known at the hands of God. I think of Paul in II Corinthians 12, had a thorn in the flesh, prayed to the Lord to remove it, he had learned, however, that his weakness became the opportunity for God's great strength and God's power was perfected in his suffering.

So suffering is good. Let me give you several reasons: it teaches us to hate sin. Luther said he never understood the Psalms until he suffered. The sick bed teaches much more than a sermon and what it teaches us is to hate sin. When Jesus cried at the tomb of Lazarus he wasn't crying out of emotion over that event because he was about to raise the man from the dead. He was weeping because he could project into all of human history the terrible trauma of death and the suffering that it produces. Death is the wages of sin. Suffering teaches us to hate sin.

Suffering also teaches us to see the evil that is in us. It shows us our real self, because when we're in the midst of suffering our corruption boils up, it boils up in impatience, doubt, bitterness and things like that that are manifest. Suffering is good also because it's good to see what's down in your corrupt heart, but then it moves you. Suffering also is good because it drives your soul to God.

Where else are you going to go? Suffering also allows you to be conformed to Christ, to become a fellow sufferer. Paul said he longed to be conformed to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Paul loved that he had the marks of Jesus Christ in his body that he could bear the reproach of Christ and we as Christians, as Romans 8 says, suffer with him in order that we might reign with him.

And I think suffering is good because it tends to drive out sin. Suffering is the fire that burns the dross out of the gold and refines us. Job 23:10, "When he has tried me I will come forth as gold." Suffering is good because it confirms our sonship. Hebrews 12:7 says, "All the sons of God he scourges as any loving father would do to discipline and to perfect." So if you're suffering your sonship is being confirmed.

Suffering is good because it brings joy through the chastening. Once we've been chastened happy is the man, Job says, "Whom the Lord corrects." It has such a positive work. I think suffering is good also because it makes us long for heaven. You can only take so much of it and then you want to go to heaven. So suffering, though bad, in the sense that it's an effect of sin, works for our good as God causes that to happen.

Let's look secondly at struggling, not only suffering but just struggling. And here we're talking about temptation. Temptation is bad. There's no question about it. Struggling with demons is bad, struggling with the flesh is bad, struggling with Satan is bad, but it works for our good, why? Because it sends us to our knees to pray. It drives us to God. It devastates our spiritual pride. It shows us where we're weak and vulnerable. It crushes our otherwise proud heart. I think part of Peter's usefulness was that he lost the struggle so many times his human pride was obliterated or nearly so.

Struggling in temptation enables us to help others in the same struggle. Whoever has felt the claws of the lion of temptation is best able to help others in the same battle with the lion. Struggling causes us to lean on the strength of Christ. It causes us to learn the word of God so that we can have the sword to defend ourselves. Struggling makes us desire heaven. I've told you before when I think of heaven I don't think about wandering with a gold harp in my hand humming a tune, floating along on a cloud.

What makes heaven desirable to me as much as I am interested in a curious way to see the architecture of heaven and to understand all the brilliance and beauty described in the Bible, what makes heaven particularly appealing to me is two fold. One is to see Jesus Christ in all his eternal glory and the manifestation of the glory of God in a perfect universe, but secondly what makes heaven desirable to me is there is no struggle there. And the less and assent battle with sin and temptation fallenness in the world is forever over. And that's why Paul in Philippians 1 said I don't mind staying here but it would be a lot better to depart and be with Christ.

So even temptation, which is bad, works for our good. It sends us to prayer, it breaks our pride, it drives us to the word of God to be able to defend ourselves, it instructs us so that we can help others who are being tempted, it causes us to learn to lean on Jesus Christ for his strength, it makes us even desire heaven.

Peter, you remember, after he had fallen to temptation went out and wept bitterly and that was good. That was part of brokenness. So suffering is a bad thing that can work for good. Struggling is a bad thing that can work for good.

Thirdly, sin itself. And this might be surprising to some, but sin itself works for good, even the sins of believers work for their good, not by the character of sin, not by the virtue of something inherent in sin that is good because there's nothing in it that is good, but by the goodness of God and the power of God who brings light out of darkness and sweet out of bitter, God can literally bring good out of sin. This doesn't lessen the vile character of sin, doesn't lessen the filthiness of sin, doesn't lessen the evil of sin, but what it does tell us and this is important, sin cannot ultimately triumph in the believer because God overrules its effect. He over rules its power and he turns it into good.

Now this doesn't mean that we should sin freely because God's going to turn it into good and we want to give him every opportunity to do that, 'cause then he can display his grace, that's Romans 6, "Shall we sin that grace may abound?" No, no, no. Sin deserves eternal hell. Sin is an affront to God. Sin is bad, it is the worst, but God literally overrules its power and its effect.

David was engaged in heinous and far reaching sin, adultery, murder, bad, but out of it came good, brokenness, confession, humiliation, godly sorrow, repentance and then praise. On the other hand the sins of Saul hardened him to despair and suicide. Our own sins God can work together for good. The first way is because he overrules their ultimate effect. And what would the ultimate effect of sin be, the wages of sin is death, what death, eternal death. What's that mean? Forever in hell. God overrules that and he overrules that by virtue of the fact that the penalty for those sins has already been paid, right? So no punishment is required. Sins have been paid for. So no matter what we might do by way of sin as children of God, it cannot work for bad to us, having already been paid for by Christ.

Beyond that, our sins again teach us humility, they teach us brokenness, self-distrust, they drive us to God, they make us long for heaven just like our sufferings do, they let God display his majestic grace and they cause us therefore, to praise him. So what are we saying, good things like God's nature and God's promises, and the word of God and prayer, and angels and other saints, that all works for our good. And bad things like suffering and temptation and sin work for our good by teaching us to hate sin, to see our fallen ness, to be broken before God, to desire him, to desire to conform to Christ, they cause us to pray, to be humbled, to be thankful, to praise God, to long for heaven, all of those things.

Now listen very carefully to what I say as we bring this to a conclusion. What I've just said to you has to do with this life. Everything that I've said to you has to do with this life. That all these things that are working together for good bring up goodness into this life, but the good of which he speaks here goes beyond that. Look back at the verse. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good, to those that love God, to those who are called to his purpose." And then it is explained. He foreknew, he predestined, those he predestined he called, those he called he justified, those he justified he also glorified. The good of which he speaks here is glorification.

The good of which he speaks goes beyond any present refining as good as that is. When you say God causes all things to work together for good, please don't limit that to this life. That would be to misunderstand this. The good here is ultimate glory. That's where the passage takes you. You have to go there. Verses 23-25 are talking about waiting for the redemption of our body, the hope in which we have been saved, the hope that we eagerly await for, in verse 25, the hope of eternal glory. And what he is saying is that everything that happens in our lives, not only has the effect of some good refining here but it has the effect of producing eternal glory.

All the attributes of God, all the purposes of God, all the works of Christ, all the power of the Holy Spirit operating in us are at work for our good. Ruling and overruling, synergizing, synthesizing, everything so that no act of men, and no act of angels, and no act of demons can ultimately do anything but bring about our good, our eternal good. Every experience God works to our ultimate glory. If it's a good experience then it produces a great weight of glory, a reward. If it's a bad experience, a sinful one, it is then overruled covered by the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ and so we lose nothing of that promise of eternal glory though there may be a diminished reward. Every experience is worked to our ultimate glory.

This then establishes the great doctrine of security. And that's what he says in verses 29 and following. Whom he foreknew he predestined to what? To be saved? No. To be finally conformed to the image of his Son. When the Lord saved you he saved you forever. He saved you to make you like Christ in glory. And so he will get you to glory. He predestined you, he called you, he justified you, and he will glorify you. God didn't choose anybody to be saved only here in time. He chose people to be saved forever.

So every experience God works toward our eternal glory. Now there's so much in that that I don't understand. I look at the experiences of my life and I wonder what in the world do they have to do with eternal glory? I don't know the answer to that, but I know that everything that God is doing in my life, working with good things and bad things, working with my suffering, my struggle, my sin, working with the good and the bad in my life has implications in eternity as to the eternal weight of glory, which I will receive, and then cast at the feet of Jesus Christ. Everything works toward that eternal glory.

And so I say that statement is the most glorious pronouncement that God has ever made to his beloved children. Nothing can change that and that's why he says that in verse 39. "Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is the doctrine of security. It doesn't matter what happens in the world around me, it doesn't matter what happens on a global basis, it doesn't matter what happens on a national level, it doesn't really matter what happens on a personal level, it doesn't matter what the struggles are, the suffering is, it doesn't matter what sin intersects with my life, in the end because I belong to him I have been predestined, called, justified in order to be glorified, which means to literally come to the place, verse 29 says, "To be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that his Son might be the chief one among many who are like him." That is the plan of God, that's where I'm going and everything that happens in my life works toward that end.

I'm not a fatalist. I believe that I have responsibility to conduct myself in a certain way and I believe that God will bless me if I do and that he will chasten if I don't, but even the chastening has the effect of impacting my life eternally for good in the ways that we discussed earlier. The extent then of our security is vast. Nothing can come into our lives that God doesn't work together for our good.

Now that's the extent of security. Next time we'll talk a little more about the other points as we build this case for Christian invincibility.

Lord, it is really overwhelming to us since we don't deserve anything and we know well we don't, to consider the immensity of this goodness, the greatness of this grace. We who were predestined

before time, before there ever was a creation, and then in time were called with an effectual call to salvation and then justified and declared righteous, granted a covering of divine righteousness we shall be glorified. Nothing can halt the process so that whatever comes into our life, whether it be good or bad, you work together to that eternal end. What an amazing reality. We cannot even comprehend the wonder of your grace and the wonder of your power to make good out of such a mixture of good and evil. And mostly in our case, obviously we fall far short of the standard of perfect holiness and yet in the end as a tribute to your immense and eternal grace you make good out of it for our eternal blessing and joy and your eternal glory. And so as individual believers we enjoy an invincibility that has nothing to do with us, but all to do with your great grace. We praise you for that. In your Son's name, Amen.

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