

## **The Extent of the Believer's Security**

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Code: 90-178

We continue tonight in our study of Romans chapter 8. And this, tonight, is one of the great passages, one of the familiar passages to every Christian, Romans 8:28. We've been working our way through this chapter with much blessing and we come now to what in many ways is the summarization of the whole chapter, verse 28 and including, I guess, verse 29 and 30 if you wanted the full summary. Let me read those three verses for you, Romans 8 starting in verse 28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined these He also called, and whom He called these He also justified and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

One of the early church fathers once said that if the whole of Scripture was a feast for the soul, Romans 8 was the main dish. And I think there's some truth in that. And this main dish, Romans chapter 8, is summarized in those three verses which really is, I think, the heart preparation for the benediction that begins in verse 31. Starting in verse 31 and going to the end of the chapter is one long paean of praise and it comes immediately after this summary in verses 28 through 30.

Backing you up a little bit, remember that Paul in the epistle to the Romans is discussing the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, that is the truth by which we are saved. And he's discussing it in all of its features. He talks about man's condition in sin in the first three chapters, and starting toward the end of chapter 3 and all the way through chapter 7 he talks about justification and its fruits, or its effects. Then in chapter 8 he gives to us the great reality that justification is eternal, that whoever the Lord justifies He glorifies, that anyone that is saved in the beginning will be saved in the end. In other words, that we are eternally secure and will persevere in faith to the end. That great truth of chapter 8 is summarized in those three verses that I just read to you. They sum up the whole doctrine of eternal security. "Whoever the Lord foreknew He predestined, whoever He predestined He called, whoever He called He justified, and whoever He justified He glorified." And nobody is lost in the process and that is because "God causes all things to work together for their good." That is the sum of this wonderful text. Justification is eternal.

And as we've been learning in chapter 8, justification and its eternal character is secured to the believer by the marvelous ministry of the Holy Spirit whose work is outlined throughout this chapter. It is the Spirit who secures us in a no-condemnation status. We will never be condemned, we are

secured eternally as justified in a no-condemnation status because of the work of the Holy Spirit. We saw back in verses 2 and 3 that it is the Holy Spirit who frees us from sin and death. In verse 4 it is the Holy Spirit who grants to us the fulfillment of the law by giving us the righteousness of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit in verses 5 to 11 that changes our nature. It is the Holy Spirit in verses 12 and 13 who empowers us for victory over sin. It is the Holy Spirit in verses 14 to 16 who confirms our adoption as children of God. And then in verses 17 to 27, it is the Holy Spirit who guarantees our eternal glory. And we saw last time that ultimately the Holy Spirit guarantees our glory by what it says in verse 27, He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. It is the ongoing intercessory work of the Holy Spirit that secures our eternal glory. That is the great truth that we looked at last time.

So, the Holy Spirit does this securing work, keeping us in a no-condemnation status. He does it in all the ways that we have gone through up to verse 27. Now in verses 28 to 30 is a summary, it is a summary. And you have in this summary a great promise in verse 28, and that's where we want to start our look. Verse 28, very familiar to Christians, is perhaps the most highly regarded of all promises that believers enjoy because it is so comprehensive. It says that He causes, God causes, all things to work together for good to those that love Him. And it is the "all things" there that is so comforting. This great text needs our close and careful attention because of its richness. And we're going to give it our close attention for a few weeks. We won't be able to do it next Lord's Day because we'll have the concert, but we're going to do it for a few Sunday nights coming along because the truth of this verse is rich and far reaching.

Now if you just take verse 28, which, as I say, is part of this summary of the security of the believer. We could divide it into four sections. Verse 28 talks about the extent of our security, it talks about the recipients of security, the source of security and the certainty of security comes in verses 29 and 30. The extent of security, it covers all things. The recipients of this security, those who love God. The source of their security, they are called. The certainty of their security, that whoever He foreknew and whoever He predestined and whoever He called and whoever He justified He glorified. So we see the extent, the recipients, the source and the certainty of security. If anybody ever asks you where in the Bible it tells them about being eternally secure, this is where you go first and foremost.

Now let's take that first point tonight and let's just talk about the extent of our security. How really secure are we? Well, here is the extent of our security in one simple statement, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good." That is the extent of our security. That is a tremendously comforting and reassuring statement. There could not be a more reassuring statement than that. No statement made to a believer could contribute more hope, more happiness, more freedom and more joy in the heart than that statement because what it says is that no matter what pain, no matter what problems, no matter what failures, no matter what difficulties, no matter what disasters, no matter what sin, no matter what suffering, no matter what temptation, all things work together for good. The extent is emphasized in the word pantain the Greek, meaning all things. It is a comprehensive promise. And the context has no limits, the context puts no limits on it. There's

nothing that qualifies the "all things," nothing. It means absolutely what it says, all things work together for good. God takes anything and everything that occurs in a believer's life and rather than it potentiating the believer's loss of salvation, rather than it potentiating the believer's condemnation, God makes it work together for the believer's ultimate good. This is the greatest promise that we can have in this life. There are absolutely no limits on this statement in this context. It is limitless.

Verse 32 I think again reiterates the limitless nature of this security when it says, "If God didn't spare His own Son," if God would give His greatest gift, His Son, "for us while we were yet sinners, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things." In other words, if God would give us the best gift which is His Son to save us when we were sinners, won't God do whatever is necessary to keep us now that we're His? That's the point. He will freely, without constraint give us all things, whatever the extent, whatever the amount, whatever the intensity, whatever the overwhelming character and nature of our trouble, it all is woven together by God for our good.

Look back at the verse again. The verse starts with this confidence, "And we know..." This isn't something that is ambiguous, this isn't something that is a possibility, this isn't something that is a potential, this is something that is reality and we know that God causes all things to work together. Take that verb "work together," it's the Greek verb sunerge from which we get synergism which means "to work together." Everything is synergistic, everything blends together, everything operates cooperatively.

In the Psalms you have a similar statement in Psalm 25:10 where it says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant." That really is an Old Testament parallel promise, to those that are His who keep His covenant, who believe in Him, who follow Him, all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.

Now, all things then are synergized by God, woven together, brought together in order to produce good. Listen carefully. All things are not necessarily good in themselves, right? But God takes all things and weaves them into what is good. The word "good" here needs our attention, it's agathon from which we get that old name that your old aunt had or your grandma, Agatha. And agathon means "good in the purest and truest sense," what is morally good, what is practically good. There's another word for good in the New Testament, kalos, and it means "what is beautiful, or what looks good, outward goodness, outward beauty." But this is the inherent goodness. And God is taking everything that happens in the believer's life, no matter what it is, and effecting out of it ultimate good, moral good, practical good, real good. Kalos appeals to the eyes, agathos appeals to the soul. Kalos appeals to the eyes, agathos appeals to the moral sense. This is true goodness. No matter what happens in your life it will turn out good. And that is the reason you could never lose your salvation because no matter what happens it turns out...what?...good. That is a gilt-edge promise that nothing can happen in the life of a believer that can end up in ultimate bad. It's another way of saying "Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ," down in verse 35. It's another way of saying what

is in verse 31, "If God is for us, who is against us?" It's another way of saying what is in verse 34, "Who is going to condemn us?" If everything works together for good, then nothing could possibly cause us to lose our salvation. That's his point. It is an absolutely potent argument. God calls, justifies and glorifies and nobody falls through the cracks, everything is causing ultimately their eternal good.

In Deuteronomy 8:16 in the wilderness it says, "He fed you manna which your fathers didn't know that He might humble you and that He might test you to do good for you in the end." You know, that is really consistent with God's nature. We read that in Psalm 145 that God expresses Himself in great goodness. God is good, the Bible says. Jeremiah the prophet extolled the goodness of God in Jeremiah chapter 24, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel," verse 5, "Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah whom I have sent out of this place and into the land of the Chaldeans, I'll set My eyes on them for good, I'll bring them again to this land and build them up and not overthrow them and plant them and not pluck them up, I'll give them a heart to know Me for I am the Lord and they will be My people and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart," and He's talking about the Israelites taken into captivity who will come back and He says in spite of their sin, in spite of having to be taken away, I will do good to them. It is the character, it is the nature of God to express Himself in goodness toward those upon whom He sets His love. He is a God of goodness.

Genesis 50:20, that wonderful statement, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for...what?...for good...for good." God makes things turn out good. It's not automatic, it is by the working of the Holy Spirit that it happens. In verse 26, we don't know how to pray so the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. We don't know how to hold on to our salvation, we don't know how to do that. We don't know how to hold on to our faith. We don't know how to...how to confront the issues of life and how to battle the kingdom of darkness and how to avoid the temptations that would absolutely overwhelm us. So the Spirit of God is there constantly interceding for us in this groaning before the throne of God, and 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. So the Holy Spirit is always interceding for us, always praying for us, always coming before the throne of God in perfect harmony with God's will. And what is God's will? That we go all the way from being predestined, called, justified, to being glorified, that's God's will, that nobody get lost in the process.

That's the will of Jesus as well. He said He wanted to keep all that the Father gave Him. And so the Spirit is the one who works out that will of God and that desire of Christ by holding on to us, interceding for us incessantly as the great priest who dwells within us. The yearning of the Holy Spirit, the groaning, remember, is that we would come to final glory. Remember that we saw the whole creation is groaning for final glory and believers are groaning for final glory, and then in verses 26 and 27, the Holy Spirit is groaning that we might come to final glory. He is interceding always with these inexpressible communions between the trinity that we might be brought to glory. It is because

of that that verse 28 is true, all things are working together for good because the Holy Spirit is interceding for us, because the Son at the right hand of God is interceding for us as our lawyer of defense and our Advocate against any who would come to condemn us and because the purposes of God are being carried out.

Well this all ties together. This is really a monumental important passage. We are secure, we're secure forever in a no-condemnation status because of the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit and because of that intercessory work of the Holy Spirit and because of the ongoing intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of God and because it is the plan of God and the whole of the trinity is in harmony that all who have been predestined before the foundation of the world will be brought to glory, that plan is unfolding. Not just because it was said, because it was said and it is being done. And again I say to you, there are no restrictions in verse 28 at all, absolutely no restrictions. Due to the consummate cooperative work of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, everyone who truly comes to faith in Christ will be brought to glory. That's why John says, "They went out from us," when somebody departs from the faith, denies Christ and leaves, "they went out from us because they were not...what?...of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us." Why? Because that's the Father's plan, that's the Father's will, that's the Son intercessory goal and that's the Spirit's intercessory goal...to sustain us in a non-condemnation status to bring us to glory.

Now what we have then in verse 28 is the fact that everything due to this plan of God, due to the will of God and due to the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit, particularly in verse 26 and 27, He can actually say in verse 28 that everything that happens in your life will work out for good. And the good here, let me say it to you clearly, the good here is eternal glory. Okay? The good here is eternal glory. Now that doesn't mean the only good is going to be realized in eternity, the good here is going to sustain you into eternity. It involves your eternal glory and it involves getting you to that.

You say, "Well, what do you mean by 'all things' here?" Well, there are no limits so let's talk about it. Let's see how far we can go with this thing. First of all, and I'll give you two points cause there are only two points to make here. There are only two kinds of things that can happen to you here. What are they? Good things and bad things. Pretty simple, isn't it? Didn't take me long to figure out the outline here. The only things that can happen to you are good things or bad things and in either case they work together for what? For good.

Well, let's talk about the good things that work together for good. That's obvious, but maybe so obvious if I asked you what are the good things that work together for good, you might not...you might not know what to say. What good things work together for good? Well, let's start with God's nature, that's the best thing in existence in the universe cause God is perfect and perfectly holy. He is pure goodness and His nature works for our good.

What do you mean by that? Well, let's take some of His attributes. His great power works for our good. How does it do that? Well His great power supports us, doesn't it, in trouble? Isn't it Deuteronomy 33:27 that says, "Underneath are the everlasting arms?" Remember Daniel? Jonah? The three Hebrews in the fire in Babylon, all supported by God's great power. Second Corinthians 12:9, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." It is God's power that provides all that we need. It is God's power that conquers our great enemy Satan and all other enemies. It is God's power that carries us to victory. It is God's power by which we overcome the flesh and sin. It is the goodness of God's power then that works for our good.

We could secondly say His great wisdom works for our good because it is our wisdom that instructs us. "I will guide you with My eye," it says in Psalm 32:8. And He has given us the guidance through His Word, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The wisdom of God is revealed on the pages of Scripture. And as we expose ourselves to the truth of God, that great wisdom instructs us and leads us in a path of obedience and therefore leads us in the path of blessing and the path of joy. "Happy is the man who hears My Word and does it," Jesus said.

So, the goodness of God's very nature leads to goodness for us...His power, His wisdom. It is His power ultimately that will do the victory...will do the victorious work over Satan. It is His power that ultimately holds us. It is His wisdom that gave us the gospel. It is His wisdom that provided the path of righteousness for us. It is His wisdom that devised the saving plan in Christ. So those good things about God's good nature work for our good.

And His kindness, His great kindness leads us to repentance, it says in Romans chapter 2. God is kind and His kindness works for our good. We could also say beyond God's nature, and we could go on with that endlessly. Everything in God's nature works for our goodness...His grace, His mercy, His compassion, even His law which calls us to the obedience that produces blessing. But let's take, secondly, God's promises. Not only God's nature but just talk for a minute about God's promises. God's promises work for our good. The precious promises of God are the supply for the troubled soul which guilt comes and we read in the Scripture that He keeps mercy for thousands. He promises to be gracious to the humble, James 4. When disobedience is our experience and when we disobey His Word and disobey His law, we have the promise of Hosea 14:4, "I will heal their backslidings." The promise of Micah 7:18, "Who is a pardoning God like Thee?" There is grace with Him. There is mercy with Him. There is forgiveness with Him. There is pardon with Him.

When trouble comes we have the promise of Psalm 91:15, "I will be with him in trouble." Psalm 37:39, "I will give him strength in the time of trouble." When deprivation comes and we're out of human resources, Philippians 4:19 says, "My God shall supply all your needs." Psalm 37:25 says, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." Jacob said, "Lord, Thou hast said Thou wilt do me good," Genesis 32:12. God's promises secure the goodness of God to us.

So, God's nature is good and brings us goodness. God's promises are good and produce for us goodness. And I just need to add not only does the very character of God, the very nature of God, the very promises of God work for our good, but all of Scripture works for our good. I have to add that because I don't want to just leave it with the promises...all of Scripture works for our good.

It says in the twentieth chapter of Acts and verse 32, "The Word of His grace is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." And everything that the Word calls for produces good...everything. Worship, obedience to all the commands of Scripture, all of the means of grace that are there applied, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and making melody in your heart to the Lord, submitting, obeying all the Scripture works for good. Those are the good things...the character of God, the promises of God, the Word of God.

And let me add, fourthly, prayer works for our good. This is a means of grace that single out...prayer works for our good. It is really the key that unlocks the treasury of God's mercy. Prayer keeps the heart open to God and shut to sin. Prayer mitigates the intemperate hearts and the swellings of lust. It was Luther's counsel long ago to a friend when he perceived a temptation began to arise to immediately go to prayer. It is the dispeller of sorrow because it vents the grief, it eases the heart. It says in 1 Samuel 1 that when Hannah had prayed in her sorrow, she went away and was no more sad. These are good things. All that the Bible calls for prayer, worship, the Lord's table, any form of obedience, any form of submission to the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, anything in the Scripture, anything that it calls for, any means of grace becomes a source of good.

Well, let's go beyond that. Let's go beyond the character, the nature of God, the promises of God, the Scripture and all its fullness and all that it calls for, let's talk about angels. Angels are good, good angels, holy angels. And do you know they work for our good? They work for our good. Hebrews 1:14, it says, "Angels are ministering spirits set out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation." We don't even know what's going on, folks, but it is all the time, angels are assisting in bringing us to glory. They're sent out to render service to us so that we will inherit our salvation. They protect us from those things that would destroy us. Matthew 18 verse 10, one of the really remarkable statements of Jesus, He said this, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones," talking about believers, these little ones who believe in Me, meaning believers who are childlike, which we all are, "don't look down or think little on these little ones for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." And the picture here is, God's in heaven and God is watching His children and if you despise them or belittle any believer, it shows up as concern to God and the angels are always watching God's face, as it were, to pick up that concern to be dispatched by Him to the aid of those believers. Tremendous concept.

God in His nature works for our good, God in His promises works for our good. God in His Word has produced all kinds of means spiritually to produce our good. And God has even given to holy angels the assignment of working for our good. And they're always beholding His face so that they're in ready contact with Him to be dispatched to the aid of those for whom He shows concern.

And then I would add another category, there's only one left, and that's people. Other believers work for our good, that's true...other believers work for our good. I think there would be a lot of places where you could see this, none better than 2 Corinthians 1:24, Paul says, "We are workers with you for your joy...we are workers with you for your joy."

You know, the Lord has distributed through the entire body of Christ spiritual gifts. I have the gifts in the area of teaching and preaching, you have gifts in various areas, and those gifts are to be used for the strengthening of believers. And I would hope that the expression of my gift and the expression of my life and the expression of my ministry works for your good, for your spiritual edification, for your greater knowledge of Scripture, your greater love for Christ, your greater love for God, your greater service to the Lord, your greater grasp of truth so that you can honor Him in His Word. Hebrews 10:24 says, "When you come together, stimulate one another to love and good works." So we come together to worship with the purpose of stimulating each other to goodness. So saints work together to produce good in each other's lives, that's what such an atrocity when a believer leads another believer into sin and that's why Jesus said in Matthew 18 also that if you lead another believer into sin you'd be better off to be drown with a millstone around your neck and thrown in the deep sea. You never want to lead another believer into sin, you always want to do good to them.]

James 5 talks about the spiritually strong helping the spiritually weak in praying for them. So good can be brought about by good things. Our good God is doing good for us constantly as an expression of the goodness of His character and His nature. Our good God has made to us great and precious promises. Our God has given us His good Word which ministers good to us as we learn it and apply it and obey it. God has called the good and holy angels to our aid to do good for us. And God has designed that saints within the church minister mutually goodness to each other. These are the good things.

Well, all of that is important and all of that is true, but frankly, that is not really the important element of the passage. Go back to the passage for a minute. What the passage is really trying to say to us here that it's not just good things that work for our good, but it's bad things that work for our good. If everything went exactly the way we would want it to go, we wouldn't even ask the question whether our salvation would be sustained. Wouldn't be asking the question...can we lose our salvation...if all there was was good. But in spite of all that God does, in spite of all that He has promised and pledged to us, in spite of all that's in His Word, in spite of all the paths of obedience we can walk and thereby be blessed, in spite of the work of holy angels, in spite of the mutual stimulation and goodness of believers around us, in spite of all of that our lives are still filled with bad things, aren't



they? Man is born of the trouble as the sparks fly upward. Jesus said, "In the world you're going to have trouble, tribulation." And we have bad things in our lives and those become the real issue.

Can bad things separate us from God? Can bad things bring us out of a no-condemnation status into a condemnation status? Can bad things cause Christ not to love us anymore? Can bad things cause God to remove our salvation?

Well, let's ask the question and let's answer it. There are three categories of bad things that I want you to see...three categories of bad things. Category number one, we'll just call suffering...suffering. Suffering is bad. I mean, it's reflective of the curse. Adam and Eve didn't suffer in the garden before the Fall. There wasn't any pain. There wasn't any sorrow. There weren't any tears. There wasn't even any death. But the first area of bad things that we have to deal with is suffering. Life is just full of it...full of it. It starts out at the beginning and stays there and maximizes itself at the end in the horrors of death. It's just...life is just full of bad things.

Yesterday I was at the hospital praying with a dear couple in our church who have a little baby who is three-and-a-half weeks old and can't breathe and has a very serious genetic disease. That's a heart-wrenching, crushing thing when your first little one is in that condition and is only kept alive by machinery. As I prayed with the mother and the father who was holding that little life all plugged and wired into everything in the neonatal ICU unit, I was reminded that life is full of pain and suffering. That's how it is. And you know something? That's within the plan of God. Ruth 1:21 says, "The Almighty has afflicted me." In Exodus God said, "Have not I made the blind, and the lame, and the ????" Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord...what?...taken away." Jeremiah 24:5 says, "Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive and Judah whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." Isn't that amazing? God says I'm sending Judah into captivity in Chaldea, or Babylon, for their good. That was a bad thing as far as they were concerned. It involved the destruction of Jerusalem, it involved literally leveling the city of Jerusalem, it involved the massacre and death of many, many people. But it was suffering of rather monstrous proportions.

But even suffering which is bad can work for good. First Peter 5:10 puts it this way, "After you have suffered for a little while the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm strengthen and establish you." That's why James 1 says, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials...right?...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience and patience has a perfect work." Suffering produces good. Why? We learn how to deal with pain and therefore we learn how to help others deal with it. We learn compassion. We learn patience. We learn gentleness. We learn trust. We experience grace from God and mercy and sustenance.

The goodness of God can come out of suffering. I think of Joseph, his brothers threw him in a pit, sold him off as a slave. He was thrown into prison but in the end it all worked together for good, and

that's Genesis 50:20, "You meant it for evil, I meant it for good."

And then there was Job. There's a man who suffered. Lost everything he had, absolutely everything, all his children died, lost all of his wealth, all of his crops, all of his land, everything, all of his animals. Then he got ulcers and he got boils. He was a catastrophe without parallel. Through it all God was working good and in the end he says this, "I heard of Thee with the hearing of mine ear but now my eye sees Thee and I repent in dust and ashes." He learned the greatness and goodness of God through it all. It was a remarkable, remarkable lesson.

Paul, burdened in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 with a thorn in the flesh. Prayed three times for the Lord to remove it, the Lord said I'm not removing it, I'm going to leave it there because it humbles you and because in your weakness you're made strong. When you can't trust yourself, and when you're at the end of your own resources, then you have to turn to me and then you become strong. Even his blindness in Acts 9 drove him to Christ. Suffering is good.

God uses it to do a number of things. I'll just recite a few of them. He uses it to teach us to hate sin. You know, when you look at all the suffering in the world as Christians, you don't ask the questions that the world asks. The world says...why has all this happened?...right? Why is the world like this? They don't understand because there's no recognition of the impact of sin. But when you and I look at the suffering in the world, we hate the sin that caused the suffering. You remember Jesus was at the tomb of Lazarus and He started to cry and you might ask the question...why in the world is He crying, He's about to raise Him from the dead? He wasn't crying because Lazarus was dead, He wanted him dead, that's why He hadn't come. When Lazarus was sick they sent a message and said, "Come down here, he's sick." Jesus didn't go. He wanted him dead because He wanted this massive miracle right on the porch, as it were, of the Passover season cause it was all part of orchestrating the cross and the resurrection. So He wanted him dead. When He came down there and He saw the family in sorrow and weeping and the torment of having lost their beloved brother, then He wept and He wept not because Lazarus was dead, but He wept because He could extrapolate from that experience all the suffering of all humanity through all the years when loved ones die. He could see the consequence of sin.

And so, it teaches us to hate sin. We understand all the suffering in the world gives us an aversion to sin, and that's good. That's a good lesson to learn. And you ought to make a conclusion somewhere along the line in your mind that if sin on a big scale causes so much disaster, it will cause the same disaster on a smaller scale. It's going to do in your life just what it does in the world. And if you hate it in the world, you ought to hate it in your own life.

Secondly, suffering teaches us to see the evil that is in us. Whenever we suffer we're reminded that we're still fallen, aren't we? The corruption of our hearts just boils up in our suffering. You suffer and what happens? You get impatient, you become bitter, you begin to question God, doubt God and you

really begin to see the fallenness that's still there. You could even get angry or you could wallow in your self-pity or you can become very self-centered and prideful and make everybody serve your pain. Suffering is good because it will teach you to hate sin, it will teach you to see the evil that is in you.

Suffering is good also because it will drive you to God. Like Paul, when you get to the point where you have nowhere to go, you wind up going to Him and that's good. I don't know about you but the greater the suffering I experience, the greater my prayer life, is that not true? When everything is going well I tend to sort of have to force myself into prayer but when there's a disaster somewhere or when there's real suffering somewhere, I am compelled to pray. In prosperity the heart is easily distracted. In prosperity the heart is easily divided. Suffering drives out the world and sends us singularly to God.

Further, I think suffering is good because it conforms us to Christ. It helps us to experience the fellowship of His sufferings. We begin to understand our Lord, to do as Paul said, to sort of bear the marks of Christ. We suffer with Him. Romans tells us that we might reign with Him right here in Romans 8. We participate in Philippians 3 the fellowship of His sufferings. It helps us to identify with Him and to go to Him as our great High Priest.

Suffering also drives out sin. Suffering drives out sin. In Job 23 verse 10 it says, "And when He has tried me I shall come forth as gold." Suffering will destroy your dreams and your ambitions and your pride and in many cases will burn out the dross in your life. The Lord uses suffering as a chastening to drive sin out. Severe chastening sometimes, even to death, some of you are weak and sick and some of you sleep he said to the Corinthians because God made you suffer even to die because of the way you desecrate the Lord's table. There is a sin unto death, 1 John says, no sense in praying for the person who has committed that. No sense in praying for the person the Lord is chastening to death, so there can be some very severe chastening. In Hebrews it says, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens." Suffering is good because it can drive out our sin.

It's good too because ultimately it brings joy...ultimately it brings joy. You say, "What do you mean?" Because Job 5:17 is right, it says, "Happy is the man whom God corrects...happy is the man whom God corrects." You need to look at suffering that comes into your life and say, "I must be a child of God because every son He scourges," right?...Hebrews 13. And if I'm going through a suffering and a pain, the Lord is refining me, the Lord is scourging me, one or the other or maybe a little of both, and after I have been corrected, while it seems grievous for the moment, in the end it will bring joy. John 12, Jesus said to the disciples, "You're going to suffer but it's going to be like birth pangs, out of that suffering is going to come joy."

And then suffering is good because it produces greater glory...it produces greater glory. In 2 Corinthians 4:17, momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond

all comparison. All the suffering in this life that you endure will be compensated for in the life to come in greater glory. It's a marvelous thing to think about, the goodness that comes in suffering.

Suffering is good, it works for good. It's not in itself good, it doesn't feel good, it is an element of the curse and of fallenness and it is related to the sinful realities in our existence, but it is good because it teaches us to hate sin, it teaches us to see the evil that is in us, it drives us to God, it conforms us to Christ, it drives sin out, it ultimately produces joy because we've been refined and corrected and it gains for us an eternal weight of glory. This is a marvelous benefit. This is a great blessing.

Secondly, let's not talk about suffering, let's talk about something else that is bad in one sense but produces good. Let's call it struggling...struggling. And now we move away from suffering which has often to do with our physical being, to struggling which has to do with the moral, spiritual battles we fight. And what I mean by struggling is battling temptation. Even that works together for good.

You say how? Well first of all, it sends us to our knees to pray. You know, when the animal sees the hunter coming, he runs to safety. And certainly when the believer sees the enemy coming, he runs into the presence of God. Psalm 42, "Tempted to despair, David was driven to God." The struggle with temptation drives us to our knees.

Secondly, it devastates our spiritual pride. It shows us that we're really weak. Anybody who parades their pride, anybody who thinks they've arrived spiritually and they're more spiritual and more pious and more godly and more virtuous than somebody else really doesn't understand that we all understand that they are wicked because a person who is truly godly is really humble, has had their spiritual pride devastated. Struggling with temptation is the way to do that. Just when you think you've arrived spiritually, here comes that wave of temptation and that struggle and you lose the struggle and you have to go back and ask yourself whether you have really as much spiritual maturity as you think you have.

So, even the struggle with temptation is good for us. It causes us to lean on the strength of Christ. That's another element. That's why in 2 Corinthians 12 Paul goes to the Lord in the midst of his struggle. Further, it makes us desire heaven. I don't know about you but I get weary of the struggle. That's why Paul said, "I'd rather depart and be with Christ, I'm tired of this, to die is gain."

So, suffering can work together for good. Struggling can work together for good. Even temptation, amazingly, can produce good. It can send us to prayer, break our pride, teach us how really weak we are, force us to lean on Christ, to long for heaven. I think of Peter who lost the battle at the arrest of Jesus, lost the battle, the internal battle with temptation, denied Christ, went out and wept bitterly. And those were tears of a man who had learned lessons. He had learned so much about his weakness. He learned so much about the wiles of Satan. He learned so much about the importance of praying instead of sleeping. But even temptation could be turned into good for us if we learn those

same lessons. I think that was step one on the road to Peter becoming the man he was in the book of Acts.

But let's get to the real issue here. Suffering is bad that produces good. Struggling is bad that produces good. Thirdly, sin is bad that works together for good. And this is the most notable thing of all. Even the sins of believers work for their good. Everything I've said up to now is true but it really isn't the point here. This is the point here.

You say, "How in the world could sin work together for good? How can God cause sinful things to come out for good?" It's not by the nature of the sin, but it's by the nature of God's grace and mercy because it is God who brings light out of darkness and sweet out of bitter. This in no way lessens the vile, filthy nature of sin but it shows that sin...listen carefully...cannot ultimately triumph in the believer because God overrules it with His grace and it turns out good. How can it be good? Because it gives an opportunity for God to demonstrate grace and that's good, because it is covered by the righteousness of Christ and that's good.

Should we sin that grace may abound? No, no, no. Our sin deserves eternal hell. Now as believers our sins still deserves eternal hell as much as it did before we were saved. It doesn't change. It's still wicked. It's still sin. It's still an offense to God. It's still deserving of damnation and eternal punishment but God in His mercy through Christ overrules that. That's the point here. It's not the...the point here is not just that suffering in life and struggling in life God works together for our good in life, the real point here is everything that happens in life, the worst of which is sin, is not at all able to overrule the saving purpose of God. That's the main point.

That's just a...that's just an incredible marvelous reality. Our own sins to us can have a good result if they cause us to be humble, if they cause us to be repentant, if they cause us to praise God for His forgiveness, if they cause us to long for glory, if they cause us to pursue holiness, if they enhance our prayer lives, if they drive us to the Word of God, if they drive us to spiritual accountability and drive us to faithfulness, if the weariness with our sin moves us toward a greater devotion to God and Christ, more worship, more prayer, more Bible study, more faithfulness, more ministry, then there's good out of that. But that's not the main point. The good that He's talking about here is the good of eternal glory...and there isn't any suffering in life that can alter your eternal glory and there isn't any struggle in life that can alter your eternal glory and there isn't even any sin in life that can alter your eternal glory. Everything works together for your good in time and your glory in eternity.

All the matters of life, whatever they are...good, bad, all are...being worked together by God. Good things like God's nature, God's promises, and the Word and prayer and angels and believers are working for your good. Bad things like suffering and struggling and sin work for your good by teaching you to hate sin, teaching you to see your fallenness, to be humiliated before God and desire God, to conform to Christ, to pray, to be penitent, repentant, long for God's grace, be grateful for

forgiveness. But beyond all of those things which are here and now things, all that can happen to you in this life good and bad will ultimately be used by God to bring you to eternal glory. That is the monumental truth here.

Bottom line...nothing can separate us from the love of Christ because everything works together for good which means our eternal glory. That establishes the doctrine of eternal security and is reiterated in verses 29 and 30, "He foreknew, He predestined, He called, He justified, He glorified, and everybody gets there." And that's why in verse 31 you have this explosion into this great concluding benediction.

If everything works for our ultimate glory, then nothing can alter that...absolutely nothing. So that's the first point, the extent of security. There is, however, a limitation here and that's going to be for next time. But the limitation here is given in verse 28, "To those who...what?...love God and are called according to His purpose." There is no limit at all on the "all things," but there is a limit with regard to whom the "all things" applies. If I may be so bold as to give you a little bit of a preview, everything in the life of a believer works for their good, conversely, nothing in the life of an unbeliever works ultimately for their good...nothing. Their good or their bad is before God wickedness and it only produces eternal judgment. This is the distinction that Paul is making and next time we're going to look at the recipients of that security. Who are those who love God? Who are the called? Very important statements and wonderfully rich. We'll do that two weeks from tonight.

Father, thank You for this great, great portion of Scripture. We always feel like we have to say thanks because these are not our thoughts, these are Your thoughts and how they grip our hearts. We are overwhelmed, our God, at Your goodness to us, Your mercy to us, Your grace that predestined us and called us when we were sinners, justified us, granting us the righteousness of Christ, and now You're working everything to our eternal glory and we're not worthy at all. What tremendous truth, what great promise this is. We thank You for the Holy Spirit's ongoing intercession that secures our no-condemnation status as He intercedes for us according to Your will, You hear and answer that prayer. We thank You that we have the hope of glory and the inheritance laid up for us and nothing in this life good or bad can alter that. Teach us here and now, Lord, what we need to learn from the good things and the bad and help us always to live in hope of that ultimate goodness of eternal glory with You which has been pledged to us by Your promise and through the work of the Spirit. And we pray for Your glory. Amen.

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