

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Recipients, Source, and Certainty of Security

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Code: 90-179

We're looking at Romans chapter 8 verse 28, familiar words. Let me read them to you. "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."

As we've been learning in our examination of Romans chapter 8, this is a...this is a chapter that's sort of like a spiritual mountain range with a lot of peaks. In fact, maybe verse 28 is the highest, most majestic peak of all. This says what we really wanted to hear and that is that no matter what happens in our lives it works together ultimately for our eternal good. And that is to say that nothing can ever change our relationship with the living God, no matter what happens it works together for our good. Paul has been masterfully revealing the great truth that justification is secured forever, it is secured forever by the decree of God. It is secured forever by the sacrifice of Christ and His imputed righteousness. And it is secured forever by the unique intercessory minister of the Holy Spirit. We have then God securing our eternal redemption, Christ securing our eternal redemption and the Holy Spirit securing our eternal redemption. And that's why we could call this chapter "security in the Spirit," as we've called it "Life in the Spirit," it really is life in the Spirit which is eternally secure.

Obviously there has been a great debate through the years between Christians about whether salvation is forever, whether you can get it and lose it. This chapter, I think, answers very clearly that discussion in no uncertain terms...salvation is forever. It is secured to us forever by the decree of God, by the work of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And verse 28 really is the ultimate statement. God causes all things to work together for the eternal good of those who love Him. That is a profound truth loaded with hope. And there's so much in this verse that we only sort of got a running start at it last time.

The verse emphasizes four elements. Let's just remind ourselves these four elements of our security...the extent of it, the recipients of it, the source of it and the certainty of it...the extent of it, the recipients of it, the source of it and the certainty of it.

Just a reminder about the extent of our security, and that's where we basically left off our discussion last time. "All things work together for good..." That is absolutely a comprehensive statement. There are no caveats, there are no exceptions. Good things work together for our good. Bad things work together for our good. Neutral things work together for our good. And we talked about those things and we showed how that suffering works together for our good. Struggling with temptation works

together for our good. Even sin God causes to work together for our good by overruling it for our present benefit and our ultimate glory.

As I pointed out last time, bad things work for our good, even here and now in this life by teaching us to hate sin, by teaching us to see our fallenness and humble ourselves, by teaching us to desire God, to conform to Christ, to long for the blessings that come to obedience, by teaching us to pray and to be humbled and to help others and to be thankful and to love God's grace and to long for heaven. Even here and now in this life, things that in themselves are bad produce good.

But primarily the Apostle Paul is not talking about matters in this life. The good of which he is speaking is eternal, future glory, and that is clear from verse 29 where he talks about those who are foreknown being predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. In other words, good that ultimately comes to us as we are being made like Christ. Verse 30 discusses it in these terms, "Those whom He predestined He called, those He called He justified, and whom He justified He also glorified." So the good that he's talking about in verse 28 is the good of eternal glory, and that is being made in the very image of Jesus Christ. The point being, nothing can happen to you in this life be it good, bad or indifferent, nothing can happen to you in this life, not a single event, not an accumulation of events, nothing can happen to you in this life that can change your future glory. All things God causes to work together to produce the ultimate good of your eternal glory. That is because of the work of Christ in justification, that is because of the decree of God in redemption, that is because of the ongoing intercessory work of the Holy Spirit described in verse 27. Remember the Spirit is praying for us in verse 26 and verse 27 He always intercedes for the saints according to the will of God and the will of God is our eternal glory and the Spirit intercedes for us to that end. And that's why God causes all things to work together. He hears the prayers of the Spirit interceding for us. He, of course, also hears the prayers of Christ as our great High Priest on high interceding for us and as a result we come into eternal glory.

And that's why in verse 31 down to verse 39 there is this great statement of praise. What should be our response? What do we say to all of this, if God is for us, who is against us? In other words, who is more powerful than God? If God says it's all going to work for our good, who is going to thwart that purpose? And the answer is no one and nothing, and he gives a litany of the things that cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.

So the promise of Romans chapter 8 is that we will receive eternal glory, we who have put our trust in Jesus Christ. In order to bring that to pass, God has to overrule the bad...the bad circumstances that we find ourselves in, the struggle with temptation, even our own personal sin...He overrules all of that so that none of it is held against us. In fact, verse 33 says, "Who will bring a single charge against God's elect?" Verse 34, "Who is the one who condemns?" No one, no one can bring a charge against us successfully, not even Satan the accuser of the brethren. No one can condemn us successfully because as 8:1 says there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

God overrules everything. No sin is held against us because He works everything for our eternal good. You want to keep that in mind. That is the good he is speaking of here. I admit, and I tried to point it out to you, that in this life bad God uses to produce good, even here. And we went through the little list a moment ago, the things that are good that can come out of even our sin and our difficulties. But the point that he's making in the major sense here is the major good that is eternal glory and therefore this verse establishes once and for all the doctrine of eternal security...that when a person is truly saved, nothing can change that. When that person belongs to God, has been justified by God, when that person belongs to Jesus Christ who is the High Priest on behalf of that person interceding, when that person is indwelt by the Spirit who continues to intercede, God causes everything in that person's life to produce eternal good and eternal glory. So we see then the extent of this security is that it is basically limitless...limitless.

Let's look then tonight at a second point and I want to sort of camp on this a little bit because it's a very important statement to make and it should be very obvious but it isn't. We talk about the extent of our security, let's talk about the recipients of this security. Who really possesses this kind of security?

Well, he makes it very clear in verse 28. "God causes all things to work together for good to those who...what?...who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." You have two very, very important statements there with tremendous implications. One of them views our relationship with God from our side, and the other views our relationship with God from His side. On the one hand, we love God. On the other hand, He called us. This promise of eternal security belongs to those who love God and who are the called of God.

You could say that those two wonderful truths sum up our identity. We are the called who love God. Now God's people are described in many ways and I want to just look at that description that's given here in verse 28, "those who love God." God's people are described as His children. They are described as His sheep, His flock. They're described as His sons. They're described as His bride, His beloved, His church. They're described as believers. They're described as true worshipers. They are described as saints. They are called Christians. But no designation of believers is more indicative of their character than this one. Here believers are defined as those who love God. They are the people who love God. That's summing it up as simply as it can be summed up. And for those who love God, God is causing all things to work together.

Now this is not a new way to describe God's people. In fact, it's an old way to describe God's people. Go with me in to the Old Testament for a moment and let's go back to the twentieth chapter of Exodus, the place where God gave the law. And as He speaks the law to Moses, He says, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," Exodus 20 verse 2, "out of the house of slavery." Then He starts in to the Ten Commandments. "You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourselves an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children on the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me." And then verse 6, "But showing loving kindness to thousands to those who love Me and keep My commandments." And right there at the very outset when the Decalogue was given, when God gave His Law, He starts out by dividing the entire human race into two kinds of people...those who hate Him and those who love Him. And that is the simplest and purest definition of a believer. Not just in the New Testament, but as duly noted there in Exodus 20, in the Old as well and this designation became something repeated.

In the book of Deuteronomy, the second law which in many ways repeats what is in Exodus. Deuteronomy chapter 7 and verse 9 we read this, "Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps His covenant, or His promise, and His loving-kindness to a thousand generation...to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Then verse 10, "But repays those who hate Him to their faces to destroy them. He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face." And there again, the same two-fold designation of the human race, they are divided into two categories, those who love God and those who hate Him.

The words of Nehemiah in Nehemiah chapter 1 and verse 5, "And I said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who preserves the covenant and loving kindness for those who love Him."

This then, this designation of God from Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 7 became common language when referring to God on the part of the Jews. And there in the book of Nehemiah long after the law was given, long after Israel had forfeited the right to the land and Judah had forfeited the right to the land, and they had been carried off into captivity, they were still defining God as the God who blesses those who love Him, keeps His promise to those who love Him and demonstrates His loving-kindness to them.

Even the psalmist refers to God in very similar terms in Psalm 69 and verse 36, it says, "And the descendants of His servants...speaking of God...will inherit it...that is the promised land...and those who love His name will dwell in it." Again, believers being identified as those who love His name.

I'm sure you get the point but I want to...I want to show you some other Scriptures because of the richness of this truth. Psalm 97:10, here is injunction to God's people, "Hate evil...hate evil, you who love the Lord." "You who love the Lord" simply refers to people who were true believers, who have committed themselves in faith to the true and living God. They were those who loved the Lord. In Psalm 116 verse 1, "I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my supplications because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live, the cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. I called upon

the name of the Lord, 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, save my life!' Gracious is the Lord and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate." Here is the psalmist and the psalmist loves the Lord because the Lord saved him. The Lord gave him salvation in the midst of his sinful distress. Psalm 145 verse 20, "The Lord keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy."

Now I think you get the picture. This is a common designation for people to be identified as true believers. In Isaiah 56, just briefly, it says in verse 6, "The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants; everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant, even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer." Their God again pledges Himself to those who love the name of the Lord.

You know, it's such a sad thing to think about. Back a few years and the issue of the Lordship debate, people were on the other side of the issue of Lordship, some of you will remember, were saying that you could be a Christian even though you didn't have any belief in the Lord. In other words, you could be an unbelieving believer. You could be a believer, you could be a Christian, you could belong to Christ even though you had no love for Him. Absolutely foreign to what Scripture indicates as the simplest definition of a Christian...someone who loves the Lord. The simplest definition of an Old Testament believer, someone who loves God.

First Corinthians 2:9, a very interesting verse, quoted from Isaiah, "Just as it is written, things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who...what?...who love Him." Christians are people who love God. Believers are people who love God. That is the distinguishing characteristic of their lives.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 8:3, "If anyone loves God, he is known by Him." How simple. If anyone loves God, he is known by Him. Known in the intimate sense, known savingly. James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial. Once he has been approved, he will receive the crown which is life, eternal life, which the Lord has promised to those who...what?...who love Him." Who love Him. James 2 talks about the same thing, the true kind of faith that demonstrates itself in works and the dominant work, the bottom line work is loving God.

Now we don't love Him as we ought to, and that's why the Bible enjoins upon us that God's law is fulfilled if we love the Lord thy God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, right? We fall short of that. But we love the Lord. That's who we are. We are the people who love the Lord. True salvation produces lovers of God.

In Romans chapter 5 and verse 5 we are given a very important statement with regard to this. It says, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." We love God because God poured love into us. In other words, when you became a believer,

the Spirit of God came and when the Spirit came He brought love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self control...the fruit of the Spirit. When the Spirit took up residence in the life of a believer, the Spirit brought with Him love for God and it was the transforming work of the Spirit that enabled one who hated God to be a lover of God. First Corinthians 16:22 says, "If anybody doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema," damned, cursed. We are lovers of God.

You remember that the Apostle Paul in writing to Timothy condemns those people who are lovers of self, rather than lovers of God. Again, that's the defining character of man in the world, he's either a lover of God or a lover of self. He's either a lover of God, or a hater of God. And everybody falls into those categories. And the love we have for God doesn't all of a sudden disappear because it comes to us by the Holy Spirit through the work of God in the conversion miracle, because it is part of regeneration, it is part of transforming our natures and giving us the Spirit to produce that love first given to us at salvation, that love will be sustained through all of our lives. And the testimony of that is given in Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that is incorruptible." Grace is continually extended to all of those who love God with this incorruptible love. It's not a here again, gone again love. It's not an on again, off again thing. It's not a sometime affection.

And I admit, we don't love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we don't love God as fully as we ought to love God. In fact, in Philippians 1:9 Paul says, "I pray that your love may abound still more and more." But we do love Him and we find ourselves, I think, in the same situation Peter was in. John 21, the last chapter in John's gospel, Jesus says to Peter who has been caught in the midst of disobedience in this chapter, and He says to him in verse 15, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" More than fishing and boats and all the stuff that you've gone back to in disobedience? And he said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love You...you know I love You." Here was a disobedient sinful guy, here was a guy who had denied the Lord at His trial, here was a guy who had forsaken Him at His death. Here was a man who had been told to go to Galilee and wait for Him, and instead he had gone back to his old trade of fishing. Here was a disobedient servant. Here was a servant who had proven to be cowardly. But when he was asked, "Do you love Me?" he said, "You know I love You."

"He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' And he said, 'Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' and he was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' and he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.'" In other words, You're omniscient, look at my heart, You know how much I love You.

We don't love Him as we ought to love Him. A lot of the time we are like Peter, but sin causes us to respond the way it caused Peter to respond. And you remember, when Peter came face to face with his betrayal of Christ, his denial of Christ, he went out and wept bitterly, didn't he? It was his love that

produced the tears. We love the Lord for what He's done for us. We love Him for who He is. We love Him and it is that love that marks us as true believers. And if somebody doesn't have that compelling, driving, dominating love for Christ, he's not of His. First John 4:19, "We love Him because...what?...He first loved us." Chapter 5 verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments." That takes you right back to Exodus 20, nothing new. God blesses and shows loving-kindness and is faithful to keep His covenant with those who love Him and observe His commandments. They demonstrate His love to Him in very normal ways...including, of course, at the very center, obedience...obedience.

So, Christians are those who love God. When you find someone who claims to be a Christian and who does openly confess that they don't love God, you can be sure they're not. When you find someone who confesses to be a Christian but has demonstrated absolute indifference to Christ and to God and to the things of God and Christ, there's clear evidence there that there's no affection, there's no passion, there's no consuming, longing and desire for fellowship and obedience, no matter what the claim is, if the love is not manifest, you have a right to question the validity of that person's salvation.

Now how do we mark out this love? I want to take a few minutes with you on this because I think it's very, very basic and important. If I want to look at my life, let's just stick with us, if I want to look at my life or need be help somebody else and I want to determine whether or not they really love God, what am I looking for? Am I looking for some sentiment? Am I looking for some emotion? Am I looking for some...some sort of nostalgia that comes out of the roots of my childhood, or my background? What am I looking for when I'm looking for evidences of love for God?

Well, I'm going to give you a few. First of all, it is a love that meditates on God's glory...it is a love that meditates on God's glory. To love God is to be caught up with God's glory, to be caught up with the honor of God. In Psalm 18 the psalmist says, "I love, Thee O Lord, my strength, the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and my horn of salvation, my stronghold, I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised." It is love that is consumed with worship. To say you love God and be indifferent to worship is to betray your claim. It is a love that meditates on God's glory. It is that love, I think, that was in the heart of the psalmist repeatedly when he expressed his love for God by reciting all of the attributes of God which were so wondrous to him. He found his single greatest joy in worship, praise, adoration. It is a love that meditates on God's glory. It is a love that is consumed with God being honored.

Secondly, I believe this love is a love that trusts in God's power...it's a love that trusts in God's power. In Psalm 31 verse 23 we read, "O love the Lord, all you His godly ones. The lord preserves the faithful and fully recompenses the proud doer. Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in the Lord." He's assuming that life is going to have its down turns, it's going to have its trials

and there's going to be areas of suffering and pain and disappointment. But in it all, he says, "Love the Lord." And what do you mean by that? I mean, realize that He is going to preserve the faithful, that He is going to recompense the wicked. Be strong, take courage, you can trust in the Lord. It is a love that trusts in His power. To put it another way, it doesn't doubt Him. It's not a love that says, "I don't know, God hasn't been faithful to me, He's going to have to deliver if He's expecting for me to love Him." It is a love that has complete confidence in God's great power. It is a love that meditates on His great glory.

Thirdly, it is a love that seeks communion with Him. You can tell if you love God basically by whether or not you have any interest in His fellowship. I mean, if you said you loved somebody, you could certainly prove it easily enough if you sought their companionship. Psalm 63, the psalmist says, "O God, Thou art my God. I shall seek Thee earnestly. My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary to see Thy power and Thy glory." He went to the place of worship, he went there all the time. He couldn't be kept away. He wanted to be in the place of worship because he wanted to be near to the presence of his God. He wanted to commune with God.

Why? Verse 3, "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise Thee, I will bless Thee as long as I live. I'll lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness." In other words, it's the satisfaction of my soul, like eating a great meal. "When I," verse 6, "meditate on my bed and remember Thee and meditate on Thee in the night watches, for Thou hast been my help. In the shadow of Thy wings I sing for joy, my soul clings to Thee." This is a man who longs for fellowship, who loves worship, who seeks communion, who finds himself drawn to the place of prayer, drawn to the intimacy of the presence of God.

I find myself drawn to know God. I find myself irresistibly drawn to books and articles that are written to tell me more about my God. No matter how much I've learned and how much I may know and how much I've filed in my mental computer, how much I've taught through the years, I'm never satisfied. I always want to know more of my God. I always want to know Him better. I want to discover some other nuance, some other richness, some other truth about Him. I want to know the fullness of communion with Him. And that you find throughout the Psalms. I mean, we could spend a long time talking about these things. Psalm 84:2, starting in verse 1, "How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O Lord of hosts, my soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord." Here's David the psalmist again saying, "I just have to be in Your house, I just have to be in the presence of Your people, praising and glorifying You." He says, "It's my heart and my flesh singing for joy to the living God." He says, "Like a bird who found a house and a swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, my nest and my place is Your altar, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, how blessed are those who dwell in Your house, they are ever praising You."

I just want to be where You are, I just want to be in Your midst, I just want to be there to praise You and to be intimate with You and to pray to You and to fellowship with You, to commune with You. This is loving God. It's loving God that seeks a communion with Him.

Psalm 143:7, "Do not hide Thy face from me, lest I become like those who go down to the pit." I'll die, Lord, if I don't have fellowship with You. It's not something you can take or leave.

Furthermore, it is a love...it is a love that secures the peace of the soul. I don't want to get too mystical about this but when you have a love relationship with someone, there's a certain peace in that love. When you know that love is real and you know that love is genuine, and you know that love is faithful, there's a tremendous tranquility that comes over your soul. Some of you, I suppose, from the human standpoint can look back and remember when you thought you loved someone, or perhaps you did love someone and you couldn't convince that someone to love you and you knew the agitation and the anxiety and the tremendous overwhelming depression and stress of this unrequited love. On the other hand, when you gave your love to someone and that someone gave it back in a life time of commitment and has continued to demonstrate the faithfulness of that love to you, there is an overwhelming peace and a sense of tranquility and rest that comes with that love.

Psalm 119:165, "Those who love You and Your law have great peace and nothing causes them to stumble." It doesn't matter what goes wrong, you know you're loved. It doesn't matter what changes, you know you're loved and you're secure in that love.

So, loving God is basically defined as an attitude toward God that meditates on His glory, that trusts in His power, that seeks intimate communion with Him and that secures the peace of the soul. Do you have the kind of love for God which gives you rest?

Further, it is a love that is sensitive to God's feelings. It is a love that is sensitive to God's feelings. What do I mean by that? Well, Psalm 69:9 is a familiar verse, I've commented on it many times through the years, but it's a very important one. Listen to what it says, David says this, "Zeal for Your house has consumed me." In other words, David says I'm so passionately concerned about Your name, Your honor, Your glory, Your majesty, Your temple, I'm so concerned that worship be true and pure and holy that it's eating me up. Why? Because it wasn't that, the worship wasn't what it ought to have been, there was desecration of God in the temple and it was just tearing up the psalmist. In fact, he says in the same verse, "The reproaches of those who reproach Thee have fallen on me." In other words, when people speak evil of You, I feel the pain. And by the way, Jesus Himself fulfilled that passage in John 2 when He makes a whip and cleans the temple out. When God is dishonored, he felt the pain. And you know you really love God when what dishonors God causes you pain. That's a...that's a great indicator of your love for Him.

You should feel some holy wrath. You should feel some holy indignation. You shouldn't be upset or angry or hostile about what happens to you but you certainly should be concerned with what happens to dishonor the name of God. If you love Him, you will be sensitive to those things that dishonor Him and you'll feel the pain. If you really love someone, when they're hurt, you feel the pain, is that not true? Does a mother feel that pain for her child? Does a partner in marriage feel that pain for their spouse? Does a child feel that pain for a parent? Of course. Friend to friend, and so with us and God.

Furthermore, this love for God that defines a Christian is love that loves what God loves. It is a love that loves what God loves. Don't tell me you love God if you're filled with the love of the world. First John simply says, "If the love of the world is in you, the love of God is not," right? James put it this way, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." If you love God then you love what God loves. Psalm 119:97, "O how I love Thy law, it's my meditation all the day." He loves God's law because God loves His law. He loves what is holy, what is sacred. "How sweet are Thy words to my taste," verse 103, "sweeter than honey to my mouth." Job said his love for the Word of God was a stronger desire than his desire for his food. If you love God, you love what God loves and what God loves predominantly is truth...truth and virtue follows behind it.

So you say you love God, then you meditate on His glory, you trust in His power, you seek communion with Him, you enjoy peace in your soul and that settled eternal relationship. You feel the pain when He is dishonored and you love the things that He loves so that it's not some kind of a unnatural leap for you to set your affections on the things above and not on things on the earth. I remind you again of 1 John 2, if you're dominated by the love of the world, the love of the Father is not in you.

Furthermore, loving God means loving whom God loves. Not only loving what God loves in terms of truth and virtue, but loving whom God loves. And that simply means that if you really love God then you love God's people. People say, "Well, I'm a Christian but I don't go to church, I don't really have any interest in church." You have a problem, my friend, because apparently you don't have any driving compelling affection for God's people. First John 5 again, "Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him." If you love the Father, you'll love His children. When you set your love on someone you love those that belong to that someone. So this is a love that loves what God loves in terms of truth and virtue, and it is a love that loves whom God loves in terms of people.

In fact, 1 John 2 says, "If you say you're in the light and you hate your brother, you're in the...what?...you're really in the darkness," because you'd love believers. It's not some kind of duty for me to be with Christian people, they're whom I love and I love them because I love Christ in them and they belong to Him.

Let's turn the table and add something else. It is a love that hates what God hates. It's a love that hates what God hates. If you say you are one of those who loves God, then you're going to hate the things that He hates because your devotion and affection for Him is going to color all of life. Genesis 39:9, the story of Joseph, "There is no one greater in this house than I and he has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife, how then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" I can't do this because God hates it and I don't want to do anything that God hates. That's a very, very basic foundational principle full of loving God. You love God, you hate what God hates. I think it's Psalm 97:10, "Hate evil, you who love the Lord." He does, doesn't He? If you really love Him, you'll hate what He hates.

Let me take that a step further. If you love God, you will grieve over sin...you will grieve over sin. We've already hinted at that when we talked about the fact that you feel the pain when He's dishonored. But just refining it a little bit, you will grieve over sin if you love God because sin dishonors God. I think of Matthew 26:75, there it is, the cock crows, Peter is told when the cock crows you're going to deny Me three times. That's exactly what he did. He heard that cock crow and he knew the prophecy had come to pass and he went out and wept bitterly. And that's exactly what he should have done. If you love God you'll grieve over sin, you'll have a hard time living a repetitiously sinful life because you have to constantly cycle through grief which sort of takes the charm out of it.

Let me add a couple more. If you love the Lord, you will love Him with a love that rejects the world...with a love that rejects the world. You will hate what He hates and that means the world which is the kingdom of darkness operated by the prince of the power of the air who is Satan himself. You will disdain all of that. You will not have any interest in the domain of darkness. You will not so profane the Lord's name. First John 2:15, "You will not love the world."

And I'll just add one last thing. It is a love that longs for Christ's return. I mean, that's pretty basic, to love. I think love seeks the honor of its object, even human love. I think love trusts. I think love seeks intimate communion. Love secures the soul with a wonderful peace. Love produces sensitivities to the feelings of the one loved. Love tends to love what the other loves and hate what the other hates. And love tends to embrace what builds up and resent what tears down. Love rejects anything that would intrude in its sphere. And love longs for intimacy, for the closest, sweetest fellowship. And that's why someone who truly loves the Lord longs for His return.

In 2 Timothy 4:8 it says, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness...that's the crown which is eternal, consummate righteousness...which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing." If you love Him, you'll love the thought of His coming. That's why the Apostle John said, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

All that is important but there's one more even more compelling issue that really sums it up, and here it is. Loving the Lord means obeying His commands. That's really the sum of everything. Loving the Lord means obeying His commands. That's how you know whether you love Him, if you have a desire to obey His Word. Listen to John 14:21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me." Plain and simple.

How do you know you love Him? You have His commands, you obey them. He's commanded you to honor Him and worship Him. He's commanded you to be virtuous and pursue righteousness and avoid sin. He's commanded you to study His Word and learn it and live it. He's commanded you to witness. He's commanded you to pray. He's commanded you to care for one another, to use your gifts to serve. And when you obey His commands, you give evidence of being the one who loves Him. "And he who loves Me, same verse, shall be loved by My Father and I will love him."

Simply stated then in summation...true Christians are lovers of God, whose heart desire is toward God. They seek His glory. They trust His power. They long for sweet and intimate communion with Him. They enjoy peace and rest and tranquility of soul because of the unbroken relationship they have with Him. They're not agitated and troubled. They feel the pain when He is dishonored. They love the things He loves. They love the people He loves. They hate what He hates. They grieve over sin. They reject the world. They long for His coming and summarily they obey His Word.

Now, can a man generate that kind of love on his own? Can I just decide one day that I've been hating God all my life and I just think it's a much smarter thing to start loving Him? Frankly, I don't have that capacity. There's no way in my spiritual deadness and alienation from God I could ever pull that off...couldn't be done. I belong in the category of Exodus 25 verse 5, I am one of those generations of those who hate God and I am desperately wicked and unable to do anything at all about that. How then can I come to the place where I love God, where there's a total turn around and stop being a hater, become a lover of God?

That takes us to the second part of the verse, go back to Romans 8:28. Only one way it could happen...only one way, and this is profound stuff here. Verse 28, "God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, to those who are...what?...called according to His purpose." The only reason they love God is because they're...what?...they're called. This is the divine love which initiates our love. We love Him, 1 John 4:19, because He first loved us. The word "called" is never used in the New Testament epistles to some external invitation, it always means what the theologians have called an effectual, or an effective, or a saving call. It literally means to be brought to salvation. Verse 30 explains that. "Whom He predestined He called and whom He called these He also...what?...justified." So we're talking here about the divine act that initiates salvation and brings it to fulfillment. We have been called not according to our own purpose, not according to our own plan, not according to our own wisdom, or our own choice or decision, we have been called to be saved because of God's eternal everlasting redemptive purpose. And it is because of the call of

God that we are transformed and made capable of loving Him.

In 1 Corinthians 1:2 it says, "The church is those who have been set apart in Christ Jesus, made holy by calling." That is the calling of God, the calling of God. In fact, in verse 24 of 1 Corinthians 1, believers are the called...we're the called. And this is again, this is not just a general invitation to be accepted or refused, this is an effectual call, and every time that term is used in the New Testament epistles, it has that meaning. We are the called and we have been called because we've been predestined and because we've been called and predestined we have been justified.

Philippians 1:11, "We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose." God had a purpose to redeem us. He predestined us before time began, wrote our names in the Lamb's Book of Life and calls us to the salvation for which we were predestined. That's a tremendous truth...tremendous truth. We have been called to God's purpose.

Second Timothy 1:9, "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, a separated calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus...listen to this...before time began." Before time began, God set His purpose, as it were, in place and His purpose involved our calling to salvation. This is the great glorious doctrine of election.

Jude starts his little epistle, "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." Wow, what a statement. Beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ, we are the called...we are the called.

First Peter 5:10 says, "God, the God of all grace has called us to His eternal glory in Christ." As Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to like to say, "The only reason you love God is because God interfered with your life." First came the conviction of sin, then a subsequent humbling and brokenness, followed by a hunger for salvation, followed by the preaching of the gospel, followed by the gift of faith mixed with the hearing of the gospel and by the Word and by the Spirit you were called to justification. We love God because He first loved us. We love Him because He called us, He called us when we hated Him, He called us when we were enemies, He called us out of darkness.

For whom is this promise God causes all things to work together for good? For whom is the promise of eternal goodness, of eternal glory? It's for those who love God. Who are those who love God? They are the called according to divine, eternal purpose. And that takes us to the third point, the source of security...the source of this whole security is the purpose of God. It all springs from the plan of God. It was all determined before the foundation of the world. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4 says, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself. And it was all according to the kind intention of His will...His will, His purpose, His plan. The source of this security is all bound up in God Himself. We are the chosen of God.

You know why you love God? Because He planned for you to do it. You love Him because He planned for you to love Him. You love Him because He determined to set His love on you. Listen to Deuteronomy 7, this isn't anything new with us, listen to Deuteronomy. Here's...this was written to Israel. "You are a holy people to the Lord your God." How did that happen? "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." As Richard Wolfe(?) said years ago, "How odd of God to choose the Jews." I suppose it wouldn't rhyme as well but you could ask the same question if He chose somebody else. The reason that Israel had a special relationship with God is because God ordained it. Then verse 7, "The Lord did not set His love on you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, or you were the fewest of all peoples." In other words, it wasn't anything about you that caused Him to make a choice, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers." The Lord just chose to love you and He is therefore the Lord your God, God the faithful God who keeps His covenant, His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him. He loved you first so you could love Him back.

I love God because He planned for me to love Him. Herein lies the supreme guarantee of my security. It's all wrapped up in God's purpose. I didn't come along at some point in my life and say, "I'm going to love God." If that were the case, I could come to another point in my life and say, "I'm not loving Him anymore." But we were born, John 1:13 says, "Not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God." Someone wrote, "Why was I made to hear His voice and enter while there's room when thousands make a wretched choice and rather starve than come? It was the same love that spread the feast that sweetly forced us in, else we had still refused to taste and perish in our sin." Salvation is based on the sovereign purpose of God who said, "I am the Lord, I change not." No wonder the psalmist said, "I will lay down in peace and sleep, for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." Isn't that wonderful? We're secure.

Well, last point, the extent of our security, the recipients of our security, those who love Him because they're called; the source of our security, His purpose; the certainty of our security. Just as if we haven't heard enough, here's the final word, verse 28, "And we...what? what does it say?...we know." That's the certainty. Not a mystical intuition but a matter of divine revelation. We know...that God is causing all things to work together for our good, which means our eternal glory because we love God because He first loved us and purposed to bring us to glory. What a tremendous verse.

Father, we thank You for this wonderful evening together. The time in Your Word is without equal in terms of importance and richness and we ask, O God, that in Your mercy and Your grace You would fill our hearts with thanksgiving for what is provided to us in Christ. And, Lord, for those who might be here tonight who do not know the Savior, who have not committed their lives to Him, who do not have this great security, this anchor for the soul, O Father, may this be the night when You pour Your love

upon them, when Your eternal purpose in their regard is fulfilled and You call them to Yourself and save them from their sins. Father, we love You, we love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we long to love You with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. For that we need the constant working of the Spirit in us that we might love You in the way we ought to love. Forgive us for our failures and may we make that love manifest not only to You but all around us so that no one ever needs to ask whether we love You. And thank You for holding us secure unto eternal glory so that everything in life works together for that ultimate good. What a great promise this is and how we rejoice in it and pray that it would be a reality in every life. Amen.

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