

**ABOUT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**

Romans 8:28

**Intro:** If Christians were asked to make a list of their favorite verses, Romans 8:28 would almost be certain to make everyone's list, and probably it would be close to the top of each one's list. If your experience with Bible verses is like mine, that is a verse that I memorized just by hearing it over and over again.

Another thing in its favor is that it is found in one of the best loved chapters in the Bible. Regardless of how many times we have read Romans 8, it is always a blessing to read it again and again. The Apostle Paul reached the summit of his teaching in Romans as he got to those last verses of the chapter where he declared that absolutely nothing could separate us from "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In a world of uncertainties, we love to be reassured that our relationship with God and with Christ is secure, not because we make it secure, but because it is secured by the Three Members of the Godhead.

The eighth chapter of Romans is a favorite among Christians also because it is a chapter about the Holy Spirit. People who claim to be the children of God, and yet are not secure in their salvation, need to get their Bibles out and read repeatedly this eighth chapter of Romans. It is not the only place where we are taught security in our salvation, but it is certainly one of the major places. Paul was not speaking of those who merely professed salvation without showing in their lives the evidences of salvation, but he was speaking of those who are in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, those who truly love God.

This is not a chapter in which we are told what we need to do, but a chapter in which we are told how the Members of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are working for our ultimate conformity to Christ.

Every Christian battles with sin. Every Christian struggles in the face of temptation. And every Christian has failed in his walk with the Lord. In Romans 8 Paul is not talking about the blessings of a select group of Christians, but he is dealing with truth that applies to all Christians. Every child of God can go to Romans 8 to find his or her faith strengthened. Paul addressed this whole epistle to those who are "the called of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:6), and to those who are the "beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7). If we are in that category, then the truths

of this epistle apply just as much to us as they did to those children of God who lived in Rome in the first century. The problem with a lot of Christians is that they don't know what they need to know. And they don't know what they need to know because they are not reading their Bibles, and may not be going to a church where they can sit under the ministry of the Word. Much of the insecurity that exists among professing Christians, is due to a misunderstanding of how they were saved. There is so much emphasis among man's side in salvation that it is not unusual at all to find Christians who do not understand that they were chosen by God for salvation in eternity past, that they were called to Christ by God, that they were drawn by the Spirit, and saved as a sovereign work of the Godhead. Many do not know that Christ died, not because it was His intention, or God's plan, to save everyone, but that Christ died specifically for all whom the Father had chosen and given to Christ. Salvation was not our idea; salvation is God's purpose for His elect. If salvation had been left up to man, nobody would ever have come to God. Man never seeks God on his own. We seek God when He is seeking us and drawing us because it is according to His eternal plan that we are to be saved. And since we are thinking especially about Romans 8:28 tonight, I have to say that for a long time, although I knew Romans 8:28, it was a long time before I really paid attention to the last part of the verse which speaks of Christians as those "who are called according to His purpose." Whose purpose was Paul talking about? It has to be God's purpose. We see that just before these words Paul mentioned those who "love God," and then we feel that applies to us because we do love God, but we don't go on to see how it was that we came to love Him. Most people don't love God. If we do, it has to be because He loved us first.

Now let us go to our text for this evening: Romans 8:28. It is a wonderful verse. When Paul said, "And we know," he was linking what he wrote in this verse with what he had been saying before, and then when in verse 29 he began with "for," we are to understand that he was ready to give us added reasons for saying what he did in verse 28. In order to appreciate fully we need to read the whole chapter, and if we really want to appreciate the whole chapter, we need to read the whole epistle of Paul to the Romans. And the more we read it, the more we will understand and marvel at the Gospel which Paul said in chapter 1, verse 16, that he was not ashamed of.

We are looking at this verse tonight because this verse is included in verses of Scripture which declare *what we know*. We know this because

it is taught in God's Word. As human beings we are all inclined to think that we know more than we really know. Sometimes our lack of knowledge can be disastrous. I remember seeing a bumper sticker some time ago that said, "If you don't believe there is a God, you had better be right." The Moslem terrorists believe that they know that if they die for Allah, killing some infidels, or non-Moslems, that they are going to be in Paradise where their own 70 or so virgins are waiting for them so that they can satisfy their fleshly lusts. They are so confident that they are willing to give their lives for what they believe. But on the authority of the Word of God, we know that they are wrong! Man is spiritually blind, and yet he will say that he knows when what he knows cannot possibly be true.

We believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. And there is plenty of evidence to show that such belief is true. And so as believers we can say, as Paul said, "And we know that all things work together for good . . ."

Some MSS. of the book of Romans read, as it is in the NASB, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good." Now I am not going to get into which MSS are right, but whether it reads like it is in the KJV or like it is in the NASB and some of the more recent translations, the following verses, and what is stated in verse 28 is a work of such proportions *that only God is capable of doing what the verse says is being done*. Romans 8:28 is talking about what God is doing in the life of every believer.

Earlier in this chapter Paul had spoken of "the sufferings of this present time" in verse 18. Christians had a very difficult time in Paul's day. He had a very difficult life. Many of God's people have laid down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. So far, that has not been our lot, but it could be in the days ahead. But we have lots of other troubles, don't we? All people have troubles. The lineup of hurricanes have caused a lot of suffering for hundreds of Christians and non-Christians. We have physical problems to cope with. We have social problems. War is a terrible problem. But Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit assures us here that God takes the "all things" of our lives, works them together, so that the outcome for every child of God is "good."

Now just think about this for a moment. This was true before Paul wrote to the believers at Rome. It has been true since creation. But did Paul

mean that God works all things together so that they always turn out the way you and I, or those early Roman Christians wanted them to turn out? It can hardly mean that because many then and since have died in the midst of troubles, whether they were physical, or a form of persecution, or whatever. I am suspicious that one reason that verse 28 is popular with a lot of the Lord's people, is because they have felt that the verse teaches that the Lord is going to work things out the way they want it to be. So we need to focus our attention on the word "good," don't we? And while we are thinking about the word "good," we need to be thinking about the words, "His purpose," that is, *God's purpose*.

Now anyone who reads the Bible, which is where we learn the truth about God, we know that God is in control of everything that takes place in this world. And this includes everything that takes place in our individual lives. If we did not think that God is always in control, we would have no basis for peace. We rarely understand all that God is doing, or what He has in mind, but we believe He is the Sovereign Lord of all things – with no exceptions. So He is working through all of the circumstances in your life and mine, the things we like and the things we don't like, the things that we may have caused as well as the things which other people have done to cause us problems, God is in control of everything, and He is working them together *for our good!* But how does our good and God's purpose fit together?

When a verse does not seem to give us the answer we are looking for, the thing to do is either to back up in our reading, or go ahead, one or the other, or sometimes both. But here let us read ahead because, as I have already mentioned the next verse begins with "for" which means that he is going to explain for us the "good" that God always has in mind.

What does verse 28 tell us? (Read it.) And then notice that verse 30 begins with words which indicate that Paul was continuing his explanation of verses 28 and 29.

You see, it is God's purpose in salvation that is the "good" that He is working out in each one of our lives. God's purpose for all of us is to conform us to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To be "conformed" is to be made like something or someone. When we were first saved, we were not like the Lord Jesus Christ at all. God had to start "from scratch" with all of us. But we walk with Him, have fellowship with Him, and love Him, responding to Him in all that He is teaching us,

we, by the miracle of God's grace, become less and less like we were when the Lord first saved us, and more like Him Who loved us, and loves us, and gave Himself for us.

So you see, the "good" and God's "purpose" according to which God has called us, are the same. And the process is described in verse 30.

Now I want you to notice something: The verbs in verse 30 are all in the aorist tense indicating that the action of the verb really took place in the past. Now apply this to predestined, called, justified, and glorified. How could Paul put "glorified" in the same tense as the other three when we are not yet glorified? This has bothered many expositors who have not really understood what Paul was saying. Why is it? It is because our glorification is so certain that God speaks of it as though it had already taken place.

Cf. Phil. 1:6.

Our salvation is not dependent upon our faithfulness to God, but upon God's faithfulness to us. That is why Paul could say what he said in 2 Tim. 1:12.

And now we can repeat Romans 8:28 with greater assurance than ever knowing that God in His faithfulness is going to accomplish His purpose in everyone He has redeemed, and then we will understand fully what "good" really means to God.