

The Chain Of Salvation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 June 2019

Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn back to a chapter we had, a Romans chapter 8. There's a few short thoughts on this chapter.

Last sub-of-morning we were looking at Ephesians chapter 1. The nature of these things is, and once around we can only look at a few things. And in Ephesians chapter 1, I felt we skipped over some parts of it in terms of election by destination.

And I guess Romans chapter 8 is the ever clear example of that for us in Scripture where it's written about so clearly and so openly.

So for a very short time tonight we can think about Romans 8 and especially looking at verse 28. That verse is so famous, a verse that we've known all our lives through Romans 8 and 28 and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.

For those who are called according to His purpose. It's funny as I was thinking about this evening and on last Monday.

[1 : 11] And I was looking online for something that was completely different, a present for a friend's birthday coming up quite soon, and a friend's into boats. So one of the presents we're going to buy them is a wooden boat thing.

It's nice. On the side of the boat was a Scripture verse and scripted and it was Romans 28. But as we see again and again on boats and on cushions and on nice wall plaques for houses, Romans 8 and verse 28 is often quoted but often only quoted in half.

So very often we have the first half of it. So we know all things work together for the good of those who love God. Very often the second half is excluded for those who are called according to His purpose.

And sure enough, and it's quite a good exercise, if you go home you can Google this verse and Google all the items you can buy with this verse printed on it. And almost always items, the first half of the verse is there, the second half of the verse is almost always missing.

Every teddy bear and plaque and whatever else there is always has all things work together for the good of those who love God or some other version of that verse. Very often we lose the second part and for a short time tonight I wanted to look at the whole verse in context and it's useful if we have Bibles to have them open and to keep them open in front of us as we flick through the chapter and these verses.

[2 : 44] And if we ignore the second half of verse 28 we lose the reality, we lose the beauty of it, we lose its true nature, we lose what the verse is actually saying to us.

Even then the verse in context of the section it's in and the chapter it's in and the paragraphs and pages it's in, this verse we have to place it where it's supposed to be. This verse falls in this chapter in these verses from verse 26 to verse 30 we have this section and verse 28 falls right in the middle of it.

And when we look at verse 28 in its full context when we see that all things do work out for those who love God, for those who are called according to its purpose, we begin to see that this verse is not just talking all about us, it's not just about me and how good my life is going to be.

But it's actually talking about God. All things work out, I will see more of that later on. Why? Because we've been called how according to God's purpose.

If we take the first half of the verse and ignore the rest of it then it still sounds nice, it's still comforting for many Christians, many well-meaning Christians, but we take God and His power out of the equation.

[4 : 16] When we take the verses as a whole and the sections as a whole we see that all things work out good. Why? Because God is in charge and God is in full control. We're thinking in the first two Psalms, Psalms of praise to God, Psalms that talk about God's power, God willing after the sermon what we'll sing.

And in our Psalm we see that God is fully in control. And that's why sometimes when we come to look at predestination and election it can be so hard for us.

If we're honest it can be so hard. But we remind that the theologians had a thing but just relaxing about it and just taking in what God is saying to us. We so like to be in charge of everything.

And we find out that we're not, it can really, really cause us problems. First of all let's look at what it means. What does it mean in the first few words of verse 28 that for those who love God all things work together for good.

Like we said this verse is so often misused in the sense that if you love God your life will be perfect. No problems, no worries, no concerns. You'll have a carefree and easy life from now until he takes you home.

[5 : 32] No issues, no family worries, no personal worries and sometimes our own shame and many Christians around the world we present the gospel something like that. Come and believe Jesus and your life will be easy.

No more worries, no more concerns. It's all fine, it's all good. And we end up actually like as we heard last Sunday evening like those in Micah's day who were preaching a gospel perhaps well meaning gospel.

But missing the reality that life is hard, life is hard. And for Christians as we all know life can be very hard. And if we take the first few words of his verse and tell someone, cheer up, it's fine, you're a Christian.

You won't worry about anything ever again for the rest of your days because this verse tells you all things work out good and that's it, don't worry about it. And that's no real comfort and that's no real help for those who are suffering.

This type of thinking ignores Christians in our own villages and our own homes and our own island across the world who are suffering in various ways this evening.

[6 : 41] If we're thinking this verse means that we can just be saved and then sail through life without a worry that God will arrange all things so we can have a happy smooth life.

Then how do we react when we see brothers and sisters in persecution, brothers and sisters in jail, brothers and sisters having their head removed from their shoulder.

It happens, it's happening. Brothers and sisters even in their own communities, their own houses who are suffering in awful ways physical health, mental health.

If we take verse 28 out of context then how do we say to them, don't worry, it's all good when in their lives it's not.

What about when something happens to us in our own life, when we face some loss, when we have to go through a tough situation, whatever it may be.

[7 : 41] Does God not care about us? Does God not care about my suffering? Does God not care that I'm in pain or that I'm distressed? If all things are meant to work out for my good then why has God stopped listening to me? Why has God stopped caring?

And that is the danger of taking verses like verse 28 here out of context. The verse does say that we know that all for those who love God, all things work together for good or quite literally for their good.

But of course what is it saying? We're saying as Paul goes on to say that no matter what tribulations we face, no matter how awful our situations may be, how grim our lives may turn out, how sad our lives may be, how sad we may be, how much suffering we are going through or will go through.

And all these things where we are stuck, where we are faced with our weakness and all these things, it all works out for our good.

Now again if this verse wasn't in context then that means nothing. But as we read in verse 18 of the chapter, look back with me please to Romans 8 and verse 18.

[9 : 01] Paul of course here is talking, he says, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul of course we know a man of many sufferings, Paul, a man who went through situations and sufferings and he was beaten and abused and we know for ourselves Paul had a hard time of it.

But yet Paul was able to say that all these sufferings, all of his pain and all of his misery of his present time, all these things are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Of course as Christians God is good to us on earth, he gives us many blessings, we go through many times of great joy and we give praise to God for these things. And God is working all things together for the good of his people.

But what is that good? Well Paul again and again in this chapter again and again in Romans again and again in all his writings, again and again in the scripture. What is the final good of God's people? It's to be with him, to worship him forever.

[10 : 13] The final ultimate good of God's people is to become like our Saviour, to be sinless, to be made perfect, to be given our new bodies, to enter into eternity, to live forever with our Saviour, to worship God forever, to be together as brothers and sisters forever.

God gives us many good things on earth but our ultimate good is still to come. In the context of the verse Paul makes that clear. He's looking forward, he's looking forward even in verse 28.

But yes brothers and sisters, he's saying to his people here, yes my friends in Rome, yes my friends in Cardo, you will suffer, you will have hard times and hard situations. But know this, that God is working all these things together for your good and for his glory and according to his perfect will.

It's a reality that all things in our lives, God is tying all these things together as part of his eternal plan. This is not new for any of us, I know it's not, we've heard this for countless times.

With the privilege even in my calve seeing, even in a big thing, God was slowly weaving all these things together for his people in the Old Testament.

[11 : 40] Slowly weaving together his plan of redemption, his plan whereby he would save his people. As we look through scripture and there's no time this evening but if you look through scripture and you weave together, you begin to weave together, even the big ways how God works all things together, his glory, you begin to see that our God is not just in charge, that he is completely sovereign, but not one part of time, not one part of his universe, not one part of our lives is beyond him.

That should never just be dry theology for us, this is not just something we study and go away knowing more about, that's good news, that's good news as we sit here even this evening, whatever's going on in our minds, whatever worries we have, whatever situations we're going through, whatever situations we'll face this week, it's not just some vague hope that God's in charge, it's our true and sure hope that God is working all these things out according to his perfect plan.

Man it was all fine of me standing here and saying this to you. I take God's word for God's word, we see this in scripture, O Testament, Jesus being born to the line of David, all the thousands of people leading up to that occasion, all those coming after it.

Again just a big things, just a few examples, Jacob favoured Joseph, so he gave Joseph the quote, Joseph of course then decides to reveal his dream to his older brother, and this is the final straw for them as we know his brother decides to get rid of poor Joseph.

But it just so happened that as we're doing that, as we know the story, we know the account, as the brothers throw him in the pit, who passes by, but those who are trading slaves heading for Egypt, at that exact time when Joseph needed to be rescued. For many years it just so happened that Pharaoh is born who makes the Jews a slave labour force, a time of great sadness and misery for the Jewish people in Egypt, but then it just so happens that a baby is born and because of the danger of death this baby of course is placed in the lovingly made basket and pushed down the river. Just so happens in this massive river the baby floats by of course where Pharaoh's daughter is washing.

[14 : 29] In this huge expansive river this tiny wee baby washes up just where she is, she raises it as a child of Pharaoh.

Then one day it just so happens that Moses with no forethought and no intent, he sees of course the guard mistreat one of his slaves, one of his own people, kills him, he's banished.

Where it just so happens that 40 years later he's out of a sheep when he sees this bush that is not consumed. We know a story, the Exodus, the Jews leave Egypt, God makes him a nation, God gives him a law.

Then for the next few thousand years we have in scripture this account of God working in all the big things and all the small things even in the individual relationships.

All things working together for God's glory and God's plan and for the good of his people. Just so happens out of all the other workers in the field, Boaz sees Ruth.

[15 : 41] From that family we know David is born and who of course is born from line of David but our Saviour. A whole line of God's providence going back, we could say to a quote, and going back long before that.

That's just the big things, the big things we know about. But for all these generations and for all these thousands of years God working all these things together perfectly according to his will, his plan, his plan which has existed as a written effusions from before time itself.

Also that his purpose would be fulfilled. Also that his son would come into the world to reconcile us to himself. That's the second Corinthians and chapter five.

All of this, the Father would be glorified, the people would be saved, Jesus would have a people for himself. So in verse 28 we see something much bigger, much more glorious. But if we are God's people, if tonight we love our Saviour, then we have the sure assurance that we are part of God's perfect plan.

Yes we are saved to enjoy good things, we are saved to serve God on earth but also we are saved for eternity. For that final, ultimate good thing where we spend all time with him forevermore.

[17 : 15] Again verse 28 falls in context of the verses that follow it. From verses 29 to the end and very briefly we see, we get a very very privileged viewpoint in verse 29 to 30.

We see this amazing viewpoint, a glimpse behind the scenes with respect of what is happening, what happened with our salvation. It's only a brief glimpse but we do see something taking place in verses 29 to 30. I don't see many other places in scripture.

So these verses 29 to 30, Spurgeon and others have called these verses, or what's in these verses, the golden chain of salvation, the golden chain of redemption.

These are the links, the steps taken to save you and to save me. As we look at these steps very briefly, very briefly, they should give us comfort and hope.

So much of this is beyond us and it should be. We're delving here into eternity, we're delving into God's eternal plan, we're delving into things that are so beyond us, it's incredible.

[18 : 32] But at the same time it's here for us. God has given us this much and this much is more that we can handle but this much is given us and this much we can dig into, this much we can look at, this much we can use to praise God with.

So we're delving into these with these down to verse 28, down to verse 30. In verse 29 we see that all these things took place before time itself.

Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined, be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. God foreknew those whom he foreknew.

God foreknew, he knew the ones he was going to call his own. That's the first step in our salvation we could say.

In eternity past, before time and reality itself existed, God knew his people.

[19 : 44] In advance of our creation, in advance of creation itself, in advance of everything we see and know, God knew his people. This is not just some general sense of knowing. This is specific, the word used here is a specific word of knowing.

He knew his children, he knew his people, he knew all about us. The God who numbers and names the stars, he knew our every hair, he knew our name before time itself existed.

In 1 Peter chapter 1, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkle of his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

In Exodus 33 we see wonderful words spoken to Moses by God. We see Moses asking God, God answers this very thing you have spoken I will do, for you have found favour in my sight and I know you by name.

The words used there, I know you by name, that's not God saying I know your name, that's God saying I've always known your name. That word we're knowing, it goes back and back and back, the tense being used is a weird thing to use in that context. But it's God saying I've always known you.

[21 : 18] The earthly Father, our fathers, our parents, they first met us if you like when we were born. But God has known his children from before time itself.

Like we said, this is not just some general sense, he knows us, everything about us and he knew who and what we would be. But yet he called us his own, even from before time itself.

And as the verse goes on, we see that he doesn't know us, but also he's established a plan and a purpose for us. Those who we foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son.

So in God's foreknowledge of us, we see that God knows his children, then as predestination we see that God has a specific plan for his children.

He will guide our steps, he will lead us in our right way. And why? Because all of this, God's doing all of this so we would be conformed to the image of his son, to be made more and more like the one who would become our saviour.

[22 : 36] To the one who right now for us today is our saviour. All of this was done, all of this, and I use these words carefully, I say a plan, but planned before time itself by Father, Son and Spirit.

All of this was part of the perfect plan of our God, of our triune, wonderful God. All of this was there. Why? So we eventually saved by him, but more than that. So we made more and more like him.

Many people, many of my own friends and my own testimony is I struggled for years and years and years with this reality.

It's not fair, it doesn't make sense. The every excuse possible. But the reality is in Scripture, God knows his own.

This is not dry theology. The confession of faith reminds us that when we talk about predestination and election, we talk about these things carefully, we always talk about them as a means of assurance.

[23 : 50] The question is not, am I part of the elect? The question is, do I love my saviour? Do I love Jesus? Do I care for him? Has he saved me?

And if our answer is yes to that, then all of this is true about us this evening. We see that and the fact that many of the most famous missionaries that have left this country and left our nation all believed in these verses.

But yet they went out and they shared the gospel around the world. The question is never, am I one of the elect? The question is, do I love my saviour? And if that is true, then yes my friend you are.

It's not my authority saying that if it was, you'd have no hope whatsoever but it is God in His Word. These are nothing short of biblical realities. They are hard for us to take in, hard for us to work through, but so they should be.

We're small, small creatures delving into a wonderful plan, eternal plan of our God. If nothing else this evening, let's leave understanding this verse reminds us that our God knows us. Our God has known us individually from before creation itself.

[25 : 19] And our God is for all of us, so that we be made like our saviour. That slow sanctification during life, that passing into glory and being made perfect, clothed, forever, like uncorruptible flesh.

Alistair Begg uses a great image to help us, a great illustration. It's an illustration, Alistair Begg himself admits his problems are as whole if you dig far enough into it.

But as an illustration to help us understand election in a sense to better understand it works well. So imagine with me, you're in a desert and you are thirsty, you're exhausted, you're at your wit's end, you're just about to pass away.

You're crawling hands and knees and you see this building in front of you. You go into the building and there's a corridor of doors on either side and you think, okay what's happening here?

You see writing above the doors, did you read it? But it makes sense. There's one door there and above the doors written, come all who hunger and thirst.

[26 : 40] That's me, that's me, that's me. There's something for me on this side, on the other side of this door. I'm hungry, I'm first, I'm exhausted and you throw yourself through the door.

You turn round and you see on the other side there's a sign saying chosen from before the foundation of the world. In their experience, we come to God crying out for help. That's how we must come.

But in God's plan, He has always known us. In God's plan, He sent His Son to die for us as individuals.

So in verse 29, we see into the courts of eternity, we see this great plan that was made by our triune God.

Now as we come to concluding to look at verse 30, we see the process of salvation that's on our side of things. So verse 29 is on the other side of the veil, on verse 30 is on our side.

[27 : 53] This is how we experience salvation, speaking generally. So God is predestined us, then what happens to us, we're called.

In some way and in various ways, we all know, we all know our testimonies are so different. But God somehow makes clear to us that we need a saviour.

Whatever our testimony is, whether it's a slow, something slow burning or something immediate, God shows us our need for Him.

Primarily of course, through His Word, through interactions with other Christians, through Him the Gospel somehow, we hear the Gospel and we say that this is for us.

And John 10, the image of Jesus, the shepherd calling his sheep. He calls and they follow him. Why? Because they know his voice.

[28 : 54] So we're called by God. And because he calls us, we respond. We cry out for salvation. God hears and he saves us and at that moment we are justified.

You see that after this word. We're called, then we're justified. We are washed, if we like, in the blood of our saviour.

We're singing these wonderful words and I wish I'd read the hymn where I came tonight. I forgot to read it in Barbus of the Tent Mission. We are washed in the blood of our saviour. We have that in 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

Saying, and such were some of you, but you are washed and you are sanctified. You are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God.

God from all time has chosen you. From all time has known you. Then in your life, at some point in your life, he has called you to himself.

[30 : 02] He has made known to you your need for him. You cry out for salvation. You cry out for help. You cry out to be saved. And then he has washed you, justified you.

You now appear holy and perfect before him. Hebrews 10, 10 reminds us that we appear perfect before God because of the work of Jesus.

By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of a body of Jesus Christ once for all. He calls us, we respond, we are washed, we are justified.

Also that the pharaoh be glorified, also the Son to the people for his own possession. All part of God's wonderful plan.

And that itself is more than enough, but we see that the last few words of verse 30, it doesn't end there. God's known us forever. God has chosen us from before reality itself, before time itself.

[31 : 08] He has called us, He has washed us, we're saved, we're clothed in the right to the Christ. We're thinking, well that's more enough for me, I'm happy with that. Then we conclude here quickly by looking at the last few words of verse 30.

And those whom he justified, he also glorified. This chain, these steps of salvation end with our glorification.

Like we said at the start, this is the hope where the Christian hear this evening. That moment where we see our Savior face to face as it were. That moment where we join with our countless brothers and sisters for all eternity, worshiping our God who has known us forever.

Not a mark, not a stain of sin, there is effects left on us and we have that comfort. In 1 John in chapter 3, beloved we are God's children now.

And what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him. Because we shall see him as he is. And it's at that day and at that time either we pass in eternity or he comes back to take us home as his church.

[32 : 36] Everything may happen first for us, it's at that point the chain of salvation reaches its final glorious link and that's it for us.

We are predestined to be conformed to the Son. In life we are saved, justified, sanctified, we are washed in the blood of our Savior.

Slowly becoming more and more like him. And then with that sure hope of glory, of future glory spent with him.

And that's the last thing I'll say, these things are beyond us. These things have to be beyond us. They're certainly beyond me. I stand here, very humbly before you.

Just a few thoughts, not in a sermon's worth, just a few thoughts as friends this evening. I stand here before you as a 24 year old. Again, my words, I'll take them all even, but God's word as we read tonight, it's fair, it's clear.

[33 : 41] It's given to us, it opens our eyes to it. That our God has always known us. Your God has always known you, my God has always known me.

But before he did anything else, he saved us, he predestined us, he knew that one day he would save us.

He chose us, he knew us intimately. We were factored in as part of his plan.

And even that means nothing really. We're just using human words to describe what's so fun above us. God's plan's eternal. There wasn't a stage in eternity one day when we spent, God said, I'm going to save you.

That was always part of the plan. That was always what was going to happen. Forever, God has said to you and to me, you are mine.

[34 : 40] But one day I will save you. One day you'll be born. You will spend years, perhaps decades, hating me, rebelling against me, sitting against me.

But I will come. I will send my son through him. You'll be saved. You'll put your trust in him. One day I will wash you in his perfection.

But one day after that, I will come to take you home, or I will come and collect you. We're just touching the surface of an ocean that we're very much aware of that so far above us.

But even this short time has given us something to hold on to. And please, I ask you, go home tonight. Go home after this and read that chapter again. Read Ephesians 1 again. Read Romans 9 and Romans 28.

Read all the things together and we see that these truths are incredible, inescapable. But also, we just give us more reasons to worship God, to worship our Savior. That's better heads than a quick word of prayer.

[35 : 53] Lord God, we come before you, Lord, and we humble ourselves and we give you praise at your God. We give you praise at your and full control. Lord, that you have left nothing up to chance. Lord, nothing up to our own vain failing abilities.

But Lord, before the earth and sky, before all creation, Lord, that you knew us and you cared for us as your people. Lord, before all creation, your plan was set eternally. Before all creation, before all time, before all things.

Lord, that your Son would come into this earth to save a people for himself. Lord, you forgive me for anything I said this evening that was incorrect. We give you praise as always.

A power is in your word and a power is in your word alone. Your living word comes from you, our living God. And when you ask this evening, you would plant these things deep in our hearts.

We can come to your word again and again and remind ourselves of these things and be comforted to know that you are the God who loves his people eternally. Lord, you have loved us from before time and you promised to love and to keep us for all time to come.

[37 : 04] Or help us to however best we can to grasp these things and to take time to care about these things. Or help us in all these things to put you first.

As you reminded Lord, that our salvation is all of you. Our life, our hope, it's all of you. All these things are from you and come from you alone. And all these things you alone deserve all the glory.

Help us as we carry on this week to humble ourselves and to honour you. I would you pray as we come up to this weekend to join together to share the bread and the wine for those who will be attending the service, the communion service.

Lord, help us do so in a heart and a mind that is humble before you. Help us to come and examine ourselves Lord, but also to realise if we are yours and if we love you, if we can save you, you are our Saviour.

Lord, our place is with your people at that table. Pray for Rev. Murray as he comes to lead us in your word. Give him the words to say, would you pray just now as he prepares for this weekend.

[38 : 10] Lord, you would calm his mind and give him, sense Lord, you give him your word and you'd open your word up to him as he delves into these things.

Look, I'm before you admitting that we get things so badly wrong so often Lord, in many ways and so many ways we manage to sin against you. Lord, we thank you that if we are yours then we know that sin and the punishment of that sin has been removed from us.

Cast into the depths of the ocean, Lord, help us to hold on to these things and to glass these things and to narrow that these things go. It's all these things, your precious name's Seek. Amen.