

The Security of the Believer

Romans 8:28-30

December 6th, 2009



This lesson will conclude our study on suffering, and will transition to security. I want you to see the great security that comes to those who suffer for Christ's sake. God has ordained suffering, not to trip us up and defeat us, but to be the pathway to glory. Many times, it isn't what we say or do on Sunday that really reveals who we are. It is what comes out of us in our great times of suffering. I believe that this passage tells us why everything else Paul says about suffering is true. A lot of people are only interested in the 'what' of life. But God just made me one of those inquisitive people that also want to know the 'why.'

Scripture

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

The St. Louis Arch was designed to sway. Because of the region of the country where it is built, the architects knew that in order for it to stand, it had to have the flexibility to sway. It is 630 feet tall and 630 feet wide at its base. It is an equilateral triangle. At the base, each side is 54 feet wide, and at the top, it narrows to 17 feet. In a 20 mile per hour wind, that arch will sway an inch. You can feel it sway in the top of the arch; that is why my wife will not go to the top. It was built to withstand a 150 mph wind, and that causes it to sway 18 inches! The Golden Gate Bridge is also built to sway. The main span of it is over 6000 feet long. Its towers reach over 750 feet tall with 7650 feet of cable, and each of the two cables is 36 feet in diameter. Sitting on two foundations, those towers can withstand a load of 123 million pounds. Because it was built in a high gale wind and earthquake zone, it can actually sway, side to side, 21 feet! It can sag 10 feet. What gives the St. Louis Arch and the Golden Gate Bridge its ability to sway? It is the way everything is connected together to the foundation. What you don't see is the key to its ability to sway.

All Things Work Together for Good

I am telling you that God has designed believers to sway. God knows there are some events in our lives that will happen that will feel like an earthquake. They will feel like a gale wind. They will feel like a tornado, or hurricane. From time to time, you will sway and sag, but that is ok. That is how God designed you as a believer. But in that time of suffering, you will not fall, you will not topple over. The reason is because of what people don't see, and that is the foundation of the life of a believer from which he draws his security.

Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, I believe Romans 8:28-30 may be the greatest passage in the Bible concerning security of a believer. Yet, we live in a time in which many Christians live under the umbrella of insecurity of a believer. But the Bible teaches that in our time of suffering, it shouldn't lead us into a time of insecurity. It shouldn't lead

us to doubt. It leads us to understand our security. What causes us to stand in the midst of our circumstances when everyone else is falling apart is that we are built on a foundation that we are tied to that will actually allow you to sway a little, but never be defeated or separated from Christ because of anything that happens in your life.

I want you to see what the Bible says is true about a believer. This truth is that we know all things work together for good. I am not speaking as a scholar or theologian; I am speaking as a pastor. I recently visited a member whose spinal cord had been severed, and he will never walk again. He has a four year old daughter and a wife. I recently had a mom and dad in my living room that had lost a son in a car accident. I have just dealt with two families where an affair had happened. So please, don't believe my theology is cold and arbitrary and was forged in a classroom or seminary. That isn't true. I cried in preparation for this lesson, knowing that I would have to say that we know all things work together for good. Despite the things that happen week after week, I still believe it to be true that in spite of our sufferings all things work together for good. This is not saying some things work together for good. I think we have a philosophy in America that says to take what's good and spit out what's bad. Grab a hold of what you want to believe, but what you don't believe, just let it pass right on through. We have been taught to filter everything out and only hang on to the good. But the Bible doesn't say that some things that are good work together for our good. It says all things, whether good or bad, work together. It doesn't say that all things are good in this passage. The event that happened to our brother who severed his spinal cord is not good. The event that happens when an affair takes place is not good. Some things that happen to God's people are bad, but all things work together for good. Do you accept that? Do you understand that? We have to get this.

- **Those Who Love God**

Now, who has this promise that all things work together for good? It is those who love God. Because Jesus had just put the Sadducees in their place (Matthew 22), He was asked by a lawyer of a sect of the Pharisees which was the great commandment. Jesus said it was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Then He gave him another that was really close; to love thy neighbor as thyself.

❖ **True Believers**

In our community, there is a sense in which everyone feels like they have an emotional attachment to God, and they love Him in their own way. Based on what Paul has taught us up until this point, we know this is not what he is talking about. Those people who love God are people who are only trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross for their salvation. We are talking about people who are believers who have repented of sins, and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. They have the promise, which means there is only one group of people on the earth who have the promise that all things work together for good. That is the group of people who are believers. Nonbelievers do not have this promise. You cannot look at anyone who is a nonbeliever and tell them it will be ok because all things will work for good. It isn't true, and we don't ever want to lie to anyone. It doesn't teach that we live in a moral place where you can trust that everything that happens ultimately comes out for your good. As a matter of fact, I submit to you that if you look at verse 28, it doesn't teach randomness, it teaches purpose.

❖ **According to God's Purpose**

I used to get aggravated at Paul because I used to take credit for a lot of things that I thought I did. And then I later found out that according to Paul, I only did them because of God. Paul never lets you take credit for your salvation! He will clearly teach that if you stay an unbeliever, you are damned, and it is your own fault. He will fully lay that at your feet. But he

will never let a believer take credit for his salvation, he always give credit for man's salvation to God.

This verse would have been so neat if Paul would have just said that all things work together for good for those who love God; amen, yes I love God! But then he tells us who the people are that love God; the ones who are called according to His purpose. Now, this is important. We will break all of this down in later lessons, but there is not randomness to your life; there is purpose to your life. the reason all things work together for good to the people who love God is because they have been called by God according to HIS purpose...He has a purpose in calling you unto Himself! If life is random, there is no promise that all things work together for good. I do not personally believe that God caused our brother to fall out of a tree that morning. I do not believe God causes a man to have an affair on his wife, or a wife to have an affair on her husband. But what I know about my God is things cannot happen unless He permits it to happen. Every one of those things, not just the things He causes, but the things He permits, works together for the ultimate good of a person who loves God, because they have been called according to His purpose. Their life is not random, it has purpose. This truth is what will sustain you if you are the parents who lose a child in a car accident, or the wife of a husband who is fighting for his life. It will sustain you if you have a child who chooses a lifestyle that's unthinkable. This is why a believer's life isn't shattered. Yes, it sags and sways for a moment because we are built to withstand those winds of life. There is that moment when you know you are off-center and you don't feel like you should feel. You may not act like you should because of what has happened, but you trust that you will come back to center because of God's purpose.

The Ultimate Good

Now, what is the ultimate good for me? Verse 29 tells us that a person who loves God, and has been called according to His purpose, has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus so that He might be the

firstborn of many brothers. 'Brothers' means brothers and sisters. It ultimately means that God's desire is for His Son to be the firstborn son of preeminence; the Son that sits at the head of the family table, so to speak. God is guaranteeing to Jesus that when He sits down at the family table in Heaven, there will be brothers and sisters there! He is going to have a big family. I am amazed at people that get tripped up at this passage, and believe that somehow God is limiting Heaven. No, God is guaranteeing that there is a big family table in eternity, and Jesus will sit at the head of the table. How can I trust that all things will work together for good? It is because my ultimate good is for me to be like Christ. I know that because of my response to the gospel, which came from a clear call from God to me, for His ultimate purpose in my life to make me resemble my brother.

From time to time, I have people who introduce themselves to me and say, "This is my brother." I quickly say, "You didn't have to tell me that, I see the resemblance." Have you ever noticed that a baby doesn't look like its brother or sister, but as they get older, they start looking alike? Honestly, when I was saved at 13, I don't think I resembled Jesus very much. As a young believer in high school, I sometimes reacted to things wrongly. No one could have said that I looked like my older brother, Jesus. As a matter of fact, there were things I did in high school that made people doubt whether I was really kin to Jesus. I'm not proud of that, but I've noticed the older I get and the more mature in Christ, there are times I look in the mirror and I see myself looking a whole lot more like Jesus. That is the purpose, the plan, the ultimate good! We who love God have the truth that we can measure everything that is happening around us to the knowledge that it is ultimately being used by God to mold me into the image of Jesus. When you see that, you live your life with purpose and you dismiss this thought of randomness and things just happening to you. You know you have a Father, not just a God, who is either causing or permitting the things that come into your life. That is why there are two different reactions to people who lose children. That's why there are two different reactions to people who have an affair. Romans 8:28 teaches that all

things work together for good because God has a purpose to make me like Jesus.

But, what if a believer doesn't make it to be ultimately like Jesus? What if there was something in your life in a time of suffering that caused you to abandon your faith, or to sin such a big sin that you aren't saved anymore? Then, can the Bible say that all things work together for good? This is a passage that in the midst of suffering lets us know that we are secure. If we are secure in Christ in the midst of suffering, we shouldn't act insecure. The foundation of the St. Louis Arch is 60 feet deep; but you never see it. The foundation of the south tower of the Golden Gate Bridge is over 100 feet below the surface of the water. At that depth, divers had trouble seeing, even with light. Engineers understand that for something to work correctly, you have to have the right foundation under it.

In verses 29 and 30, the biblical thought is in a pastoral context of suffering. Pastoral counseling, advice, and wisdom should always be based on biblical theology. I do not study theology; I do not study about God. I study biblical theology. I study the biblical teaching of God. I do that because I start with a bias. My bias is that I believe the Bible to be God's Word to us. I won't argue or study theology with you outside of the Bible. Outside of the Bible, your opinion is just as good as my opinion. I will use my biblical understanding of God and I think it will stand up to any test you give me about your view of God that you base on something else. But just know that I am biased. Therefore, when I stand beside you and you have lost an infant, or teenager, or mom, or any other tragedy, I will never believe in randomness. I will always believe in purpose.

Now, if you aren't a believer, I am handicapped. When I stand at a funeral of an unbelieving family, I cannot say that all things work together for good. When I counsel an unbeliever, I can't say that all things work together for good because this promise is not to you. It doesn't mean it cannot be to you. It can be to you as a believer, but not as an unbeliever.

Truths of Eternal Security

But the foundation based on four truths and five piers. Four truths, built on five piers, undergird everything we believe about the security of a believer. In the midst of suffering, there isn't anything that can cause a believer to renounce his faith or sin a sin that will separate him from the love of God. If these are not true, then we, as a church, must renounce the security of a believer, and start teaching the insecurity of a believer. That will not happen on my watch. While I know that I do not know all, I am convinced that I know enough to know that our teaching of eternally security is based on the Bible and not just wishful thinking. The four truths are:

- 1. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined.**
- 2. And those whom He predestined, He also called.**
- 3. And those whom He called, He also justified.**
- 4. And those whom He justified, He also glorified.**

There are four truths, but there are five piers. They are the foundation of your life:

- 1. He Foreknew**
- 2. He Predestined**
- 3. He Called**
- 4. He justified**
- 5. He glorified**

In no way do these truths and piers cover all there is to say about biblical salvation. Sanctification, or faith, or repentance, or the preaching of the gospel isn't there. But if you will notice, just about everything that isn't there are the things that deal with man. If your security was based on anything about you in the plan of salvation, you would never have security, only insecurity. That is because if you could do it, you might quit doing it. If it depended on you doing it and you quit, then you wouldn't be secure. So when Paul is teaching security of a believer in the midst of suffering, he isn't dealing with you, he is dealing with God and what He has done for

you. I firmly believe that if you get the truths and the pieces down, it will greatly influence how you will react to your suffering and your circumstances. The bottom line is that the security of you as a believer in the midst of your suffering does not depend on what you do or do not do, it depends totally on God. This is why the Bible makes God the Author and Finisher of our faith and salvation.

You have to make a decision on whether "Those whom" is talking about people, or things. Does that sound like God is talking about people, or is He talking about things? Do you read this verse and infer: *For some of those whom He foreknew, He also predestined, and for some of those whom He predestined, He also called, and some of those He called, He also justified, and some of those He justified, He also glorified.* Or do you get this sense: *For some of those whom He foreknew, He also predestined, but all those He predestined, He called, but some of those whom He called, He justified, and all of those He justified, He glorified.* You have to read this in light of what he is trying to teach. He is trying to teach that you are secure, and all things work together for your good. I want to suggest that when you start believing that when God started with foreknowledge, if you start using some and all interchangeably, you can never arrive at security of a believer. In my humble opinion, I do not believe the intent of Romans 8:28 is to make you insecure; I believe it is to make you secure.

The next verse says, what can we say about these things? And the next verses will teach that you can never be separated from God. The reason is, if you love God and have been called according to His purpose, you have been foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified by God. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of Christ. I submit that everything Paul discusses in 8:31-39 continues to deal with the thought of suffering. What a salvation!