

Romans 8:28

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: 08 January 2006

Preacher: Alasdair Macdonald

[0 : 00] The verse that we have in verse number 28, it is the climax of what the Apostle has been speaking of in the previous chapters.

And he brings this before us as the foundation and a universal truth that Paul wants to impress upon us.

And of course that truth is the fact that all things are entirely under the control and of the hand of the God that we worship together this morning.

And the secondary truth that this verse brings out for us is this, that he has this love and this favour towards those who put their trust in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Paul is saying, if he is the absolute sovereign and if he governs absolutely everything, then he says ultimately he is able to work everything to the good of my own soul.

[1 : 30] And that would also mean that there is nothing that can thwart or prevent our God for doing good to those that he loves.

And what it means, of course, is this, if this God is for us, who or what could possibly be against us? And that would say that he is able ultimately to make sure that everything works to the good of my own soul.

The last week in our own congregation we were looking at these truths. And I would like as we begin another year to ask ourselves a question.

And the question that we could ask ourselves to get us into this truth is this question. Do we know in our own hearts, deep in your own soul, you're able to say, I know that all things will work together for the good of my soul.

[2 : 51] In this uncertain world, facing an uncertain future, are we able to have this glorious truth echoing in our own souls that you are able to say with boldness, I know that all things will work together for the good of my soul.

Now, we would immediately say this, that if that is true of the church here, and perhaps you as an individual, we are of all people to be envied and privileged because of this truth.

We know that there are many people, different type of people, and in this coming year, we know that if their plans are erect, if life deals them a cruel blow, we know that naturally they would feel overwhelmed.

Or perhaps some would be cynical, some would be despairing. And they would say, like the great poet, as they look at their life, they will say it's a poor player.

They would say it's a tale told by an idiot, that it's just sound and fury, and at the end of the day, it means or it comes to nothing.

[4 : 33] I'm sure all of us are aware of that type of attitude, an increasing sense of meaninglessness in our own society, perhaps often in our own personal lives and in our own homes.

That everything's a joke, that nothing really tastes, nothing satisfies. There are no absolutes, there are no great truths that we are able to hang on to.

And nothing makes sense. And life sometimes, for you, appears ridiculous. It's a riddle. But Paul this morning, he brings before us a different worldview and a different personal faith.

And what he says is this, here is someone, and they're able to face the future. They're able to face all the trials that life will bring.

And they're able to see it with this great sense of certainty. I know this is true. Remember a wise man said, not so, a few years ago now, that today, we're placing our convictions in the wrong place.

[6 : 01] And sometimes we're confident about ourselves ourselves. And our faith and our conviction is open to discussion. And what happens then is this, that we've placed our convictions

in a place that God never meant them to be placed.

And Paul is saying, here is this certainty, by faith, I know that all these things will work together for my good.

And you notice how comprehensive it is. It's those good things. It's those evil things. It's those bleak days.

It's those red-letter days. He is saying, ultimately, if this is true, all of these things have been chosen and there's going to be this harmony, there is going to be this interplay, that through the tears and the joys and whatever lies ahead of you in this year, there is a confidence that it will be working together for my good.

Now, you notice the Apostle Paul, he's not speaking about someone here who is isolated from life. He's not saying that this person isn't going to experience tears.

[7 : 31] He's not saying that there won't be perplexity. And there will be days, and there have been days, when even the strongest faith is saying, well, how on earth can this work for my good?

Or they're saying, why did God allow this to come into my own experience? faith? And yet he is saying this, that this is not a place for the intellect, it's a place for the sanctity that faith brings, that this person is able to say with purpose and able to say with poise that I know this is going to be true. And then if we asked ourselves this question, well, who is it that the apostle Paul is speaking of here?

And he brings before us six very short and simple truths this morning. He tells us, first of all, here, it's the person who loves God.

Now we know that the scriptures and the God's truth in the scriptures is very precise.

[8 : 53] It's very critical of anything that isn't truthful. And sometimes we meet people and they will say to us, well, you know, it will probably end up okay.

And the minute there's a genuine sort of pick-me-up I suppose that we all know that in God's common grace how kind he is to us all.

That even in a person who has no faith we often see how graciously God has dealt with that person. And I suppose even natural religion would look at it in this way, well, God is going to be good if a man is good.

And that's his business, isn't it? He's good to his friends. And yet the apostle Paul brings this before us that he realises that the person that God's love is someone who is not perfect.

He doesn't feel righteous in himself. He is someone who knows that if God was going to judge him and going to bring him justice, he knows that this great truth could never be his own.

[10 : 15] But he knows also the great truth that while he cries that he is a wretched man, he also has this great assurance, yet through it all he knows that God is working in his own life and he's working for good.

We must always guard against any vague optimism because God's word is absolutely realistic.

It tells us that we're going to reap what we sow and for us here is another page in our own personal history in the history of our nation.

As we begin another year we know that we're going to experience the wages of sin even in this life and God comes to us and he tells us this that this is someone who loves God.

Now I'm sure we often meet folk and they say you know I've got nothing against God. In fact in some way perhaps I'm really quite well disposed to him but Paul is speaking about someone who loves God.

[11 : 45] Someone who's committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone who can say I am his and he is mine.

He's married to Christ he's lost his heart to the Saviour. He tells us here that he is someone who loves God.

I'm sure we're all conscious that there is a profession that stops short of this commitment. I've always heard a minister explain it like this.

He said, you know how a young man perhaps and he speaks to someone and he says, you know, I've lost my heart to that girl. I can't think straight but I'm thinking about her.

And I'm so in love with her. Can you imagine if he opened his heart to that girl and she said something like this or he did.

[12 : 51] Well, let's not get too carried away here. Let's not get too committed. You know, it's possible someone in church this morning, and that's the way we're treating the Saviour.

Let's not get too committed. Let's not do anything that we might think for you and I would be radical here.

He tells us it's someone who loves God. And then he tells us also this, secondly, it's someone, he says, who's been called by God.

And we could stop for a moment and ask this. Is that your experience? Are we able to say that we have heard his voice?

We have known the work of the Holy Spirit. And that work we're told, it comes graciously, it comes effectually, it comes, we are told, personally to us, deep down in the very centre of our being, coming into our situation, disturbing our peace, that a word, that voice, bringing us back to reality, that a persistent, that a word that comes tugging at our hearts, bringing us again and again, back to the feet of the Saviour, that voice calling us to himself, and calling us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14:50] And you see, Paul says here, that voice comes not according to our own will, or our own strength to bring it forth, it's not an accident, he says it has its purpose, and it has its roots in eternity past, and he says here, this person, they love God, and they have been called by God.

And then he tells us another description here, he says this person has been caught up, or he has been drawn into the unchanging purposes of God.

God, you know, that's what gives assurance to life, and it gives assurance in a time when we might feel everything is changing, and yet here he says, everything in your life, he says that it's going to be a servant.

Nothing is outside God's control. Everything conspires and works together so that this calling will work together for your good.

You remember that great occasion in the life of Joseph, where we're told that as he reveals himself to his brothers, he reminds his brothers, you meant it for ill, but God, he said, he meant it for good.

[16:37] You remember how I think it was Spurgeon, he once explained this and he said, here was a bolt from the evil one, that God caught in the air and turned it into his own divine purposes, so that what was seemed to be so against him, God worked together together for good.

Remember when Balaam was asked to curse the people of God, he said, I can't do it because God is with them and there is a king in their midst.

You know, in this coming year, no matter what plans we have, you remember there are always two things that can destroy them. there is a want of foresight and there is a want of strength or power.

But our God, he is omniscient and our God is omnipotent, all-knowing and all-powerful so that everything he tells us here is going to be drawing us in to his sovereign will for the Christian.

And then he tells us about another purpose he has. The purpose he has, he says, they are going to be conformed into the image of his son.

[18:10] That means that God is pursuing something and he is pursuing something and isn't it wonderful that that is true.

Because all of us get discouraged and we become sometimes absolutely despairing about our own spiritual progress.

But here is God reminding us that he is never discouraged and he has the ability, the love to pursue and to conformers into the likeness of his son.

And we know that that conforming is often difficult. It's a dying to self. It's going through many different trials. Remember one of our old ministers, I think it was Macaulay, who used to say, I think he was a prisoner of war somewhere and he saw a tinsmith working.

And as he was watching that, the tin was getting more and more refined. And he just happened to say, how do you know when it's perfect?

[19:25] And he says, I know it's perfect, he said, when I can see my own reflection. And God has one great purpose, that we have to be conformed to his likeness.

if an archangel could come to us and ask us, or we could imagine, we could ask him for anything, perhaps all of us would have our own request.

But we never need to ask that question because God tells us the greatest thing he is doing is this. He's conforming us into the likeness of his Son.

and in the likeness of his Son, we will find we are becoming more Christ-like when we are filled with this love of serving Christ.

Because honour and greatness in the kingdom of God only comes in proportion to the way that we serve and love one another.

[20 : 36] And if we have that determination, in this year, how it would transform our own lives and our congregations if we were competing in humble love and serving one another with a Christ-like spirit.

And then he tells us fourthly, he says, that's not the ultimate goal of course. He tells us that he has something greater even in the conforming of us to his image.

He says that the ultimate glory is Christ himself, that he will have the preeminence in all things.

Now, sometimes the world asks, and we ask, well, is there any rhythm or purpose to life, or what does the future hold?

God tells us this, he is this in his view, that the church is at the centre, and Christ and that church are going to be magnified, and someday there is going to be this great unveiling, and the church and all his people, the world will see that that was the purpose, that was the focus that lay ahead for the church.

And then he tells us this, the great basis why this truth that is so wonderful and astonishing is true.

[22 : 20] Why is it, or what are the reasons why all things will work together? Well, you remember he brings before us here, very quickly, these five great reasons why all things are going to work together for good.

This unbroken chain. He tells us because we have a God who is working from the beginning, and that's why he brings this foreknowledge in.

He tells us before the world was God and Christ setting his love upon that multitude that no man can number.

And then he tells us in time he predestined them. He set out the way and the avenues that he would bring them to himself. And then as we were saying, he called them, the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, bringing them to himself.

And then he justified them. He puts them right with God through faith alone. And then he says he glorifies them.

[23 : 36] He brings them to his path to himself. Now you see what Paul is doing there. He says from the beginning to the end, there is no break in this work.

When God begins a work, there is obviously no stopping him. And that's the ground of the church's assurance that in changing days, in disparaging situations, God is working, and God will bring it to pass.

And we need a new baptism of that assurance that God is working in this way. And he will bring everything in this wonderful way that it will work out for your good.

And then lastly, you notice the way this great apostle applies this. Just a word in conclusion.

And what he does, because he's not only this great teacher but a great pastor, he brings before us this morning four great rocks, as Dr.

[24 : 55] Parker mentions them. And he tells us they come out of the troubles or the sea of life. And he tells us this is the reason all things will work together for good.

And what he does, of course, as you know, he brings before us four great fears as we go into another year. And the first fear he mentions is this, it's the fear of opposition.

If God is for us, who is able to be against us? Now we know that we have the world, the flesh, and the devil against us.

God is for us. But we should remind ourselves that if God, and what Paul means there is this, he means the sovereign Lord of creation.

I think it was Schaeffer who once said that evangelicals sometimes are weak in this point. Because you notice when we think of God the creator, in the scriptures sometimes men use it.

[26 : 07] especially in the Old Testament, Jeremiah uses it, Jehoshaphat uses it. He says, are you not the God who drove out the nations? Is anything too hard from the Lord?

And you notice God uses it. He uses it in Isaiah chapter 40, when the church is weary and weak, and he says, who are you liking me to?

Lift up your eyes, man, and see, I'm never weary, I'm never weary, I never faint. He says, I call out the stars, I number them one by one, none are missing, when I bid them to come.

And he says, therefore, he says, I've not grown weary. And when we are up against it, or perhaps when you're up against it, we have to remind ourselves of this, that the God of creation, he's with

me.

you remember the father of the faithful Abraham, when he was going out, God gave him this promise. He says, I am thy exceeding great reward, and he says, I am thy shield.

[27 : 20] Now, you notice what God was saying there. He wasn't saying, Abraham, I'll show you how to use a shield. He's not saying, I'll provide you with a shield. He's saying, I am thy shield, and the next time you're up against it, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, between you and that force is the God of creation.

If God is for you, surely all things will work together for your good. And then he brings this second fear. He tells us here about a fear of loss.

it has been rightly said, I suppose, that one of the lingering fears that is in a Christian's life is this, that somehow if we really follow Jesus, there will be impoverishment for my soul.

If out and out somehow I go full out in faith, am I going to suffer loss? And Paul says, listen, he said, he gave his only son.

And if he gave him freely, how is it possible, after giving the most precious thing, that somehow in your life, you're going to be in want?

[28 : 49] He gave or he did not spare his only son. Dr. Packer gives us a wonderful personal emotional reason for keeping the first commandment.

Remember, you shall have no other gods before me. And he says it's not just theology, it's about loyalty. And he tells us something like this, he says it's an exclusive claim, isn't it?

No other gods before me. But you see, it's grounded in the comprehensiveness of what God has provided for us.

Why do we not worship other gods? It's because we don't need any other gods.

And what a rebuke it is to our unbelief this Sunday and in the coming years, if we remind ourselves of this, are you going to be the first believer that somehow finds that God is wanting, that he's unable to work this situation for my own personal good?

[30 : 15] And then he says the third great fear that comes is a fear of accusation. he says there are many voices who shall condemn, who shall accuse.

We know sometimes we find these in our own hearts. Sometimes they come out with ourselves and from others. And we're always been accused.

But Paul is saying, well, he says, let all these accusations, all these fiery darts fall silently on the shield of faith.

Because Paul is saying is this, listen, the argument you use against the devil, the world, and the flesh is this. The argument you use is this, it is Christ who died.

And I died with him. And there is no argument that can outdo the argument of Calvary.

[31 : 19] He says Christ died. But you notice he says more. He says not only that, but he rose again.

C.S. Lewis used to say that we are living weak and doubtful and fearful lives.

And sometimes the men of the world will come to us and say is there anything that I can live by? Is there anything that is really real?

And here we have the truth here. There is something that is greater than ourselves. Something that is stronger than any theory. There is this promise year of resurrection power.

The God of peace brought again from the dead. That great shepherd of the sheep. And he says this year there is this resurrection life bursting and living in this person who is united to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[32 : 36] Samuel Johnson the Messiah once said of a friend that he was a great man if only he could realize his inward resources.

And if that could be said of a man of the world, what is it not much more so true of the inward resources, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

And that power, let the Holy Spirit work in you, and let it open your heart, because he lives, I can face tomorrow, because he is on the throne, he's going to work everything together for my good.

Martin Luther King always said this, if it doesn't destroy me and it can't destroy me, it will make me stronger.

And then he says Christ died, he rose again, and then he says this, he is even at the right hand of God interceding for us.

[33 : 57] Remember that fall in the life of Peter, and Jesus comes to him, and he says, Peter, I'm praying for you, you singular, and I'm sure the Saviour put all his love, and all his power, and all his wisdom into praying for Peter.

he's praying that all things will work together for your good. And then you notice finally, it's as if the apostle Paul, he looks around at everything that could happen in the coming year, and he says this, he says, is there anything that can separate us from this love?

And he thinks about time, he thinks about heaven, he thinks about space, things, he thinks about things above and beneath, and he says, no, he says, in all of these things, he says, we're more than conquerors.

Why is that? Because he says this, at the centre of a Christian's life, there is God's sovereign resolve that what he has begun, he is able to accomplish.

And that's why he says this, he will not turn away from that work. Oh, taste and see that God is fit.

[35 : 34] Let us join to your prayer. We give thanks to our God for those a great truths that the Holy Spirit has left with us, and for God's work in the life of those who have gone before us.

We're conscious, oh Lord, of our need of faith, and we pray that by faith we might place all our hope in the one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and the God who is working all things out according to that good and holy will.

Help us to bow reverently and to rejoice that at last ultimately our God is in control of all things and he is able to do good to those who love him.

For Jesus' sake, Amen. We conclude now by singing in Psalm number 23 in Sing Psalms.

We'll sing the whole psalm, The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. Psalm 23 to the tune Tarwathi.

[36 : 57] Psalm 23, The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. Well, the Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know.

He makes me my tongue where the dream was yet known. He is pure as where the waters flow.

out Him beyond in h sight to it jetzt to return at l ou sa■■■■ in l on h Bring me to this place.

Lord, Lord, in this valley, where darkness is near, He will do not let me know even I'm near.

Your Father, your self, bring me comfort and cheer.

[38 : 49] In sight of my hand, in the table you spread, The oil of rejoicing you pour on my head, My cup overflow and thy gracious eternal.

To O Lord, your Father, in mercy and grace, Will follow me constantly in all of my ways, I will dwell in the hands of the Lord Almighty.

Amen. And now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

[41 : 02] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[43 : 32] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.