

The Purpose of His Calling

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Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 0 0] time. Turn back to the chapter we had, Romans 8. Romans 8. I'm going to turn to that well-known, well-loved verse that has kept many of us going, I'm sure, for many years. Romans 8, verse 28.

Sadly, of course, we left the gardens behind now. It's been quite a long time in the gardens and we left the gardens and we're beginning what could be a three or four, perhaps five-week series. We'll see how we get on. Looking at this section, Romans 8, verse 28, perhaps down to verse 35 onwards. The title of the series is nothing new. In fact, I've stolen this title. I think every other minister is preaching this series. It's going right back to the church fathers. It's one of the church fathers who first called this section of Romans 8, verse 28 down to verse 30, the chain of salvation.

Spurgeon then called it the golden chain of salvation. So we can take Spurgeon's title. It sounds a bit better. The golden chain of salvation. Tonight really is an introduction to this golden chain and we have an introduction in verse 28. Quite simply, the golden chain, just for a reminder for us, it's this sequence of events we have in these verses. We say sequence very loosely because we're not really in order and we'll see that more as weeks go on. But humanly speaking and as we approach these verses, we're mindful we do so humanly speaking. We are here dealing with things and we will be dealing with things, of course, which take place in eternity, take place without time, take place in the will and plan of God. And for us to put time to that, it doesn't make sense. But God in his goodness and God in his love, he knows our limits. So he gives us here in these verses a sequence. And this sequence shows us and reminds us what took place for his people to be saved. For every one of us here this evening who know the Lord and who love the Lord, what was or what is the journey? What took place in eternity past?

What took place in our own lives in time and in reality? And what is our future? So we're taking a few weeks to look at eternity past, our whole lives, and eternity future. So we'll try our best as the Lord gives us help and gives us wisdom. But we are dealing here with much mystery. And really, if we leave each week with more questions than we had as we started, really, I think we're doing our job well.

As long as the questions are questions which lead us to glorify God and his love. And there are questions in the few weeks ahead. We'll question just the extent, the unimaginable extent of God's care for his people. We'll question how can he love us so much? Why does he love us so much? We'll question perhaps next week just the mercy of God. How can he be so merciful to us? And if we leave this place each week having these questions, then I think we've done the best we can do. Also hoping to leave each week with encouragement. As we dig into the depths of the mind and the plan of God, we're not doing so to flex our intellectual muscles. We're not doing so to just grow in our wisdom, although that is hopefully what we will be doing. We're doing this study to encourage us in our assurance and to encourage us in our hope. As we seek to live our lives as Christians day by day and week by day and week. These verses remind us that the journey as Christians we live our lives on, it didn't start with us. It started with him. It didn't start even the day we were saved or the day we were born. It started in eternity past. God set his love on his people and he determined in his wisdom in his time to save you and I, those of us who know and who love Jesus. So that is the direction we're going in the next few weeks. But this evening we start in verse 28. And verse 28 really, it's the end of this process. Verse 28 tells us how as Christians we should have assurance and reassurance.

[4 : 52] And then the golden chain of salvation flows from our verse this evening and it backs up everything we hear tonight. So as we hear tonight the love and the keeping and the promise of our God to us, the weeks ahead these verses then just reinforce why we can believe everything we hear tonight, why we can have full assurance and full hope that God saves us, holds on to us, keeps us, has known us and will know us and call us his own forever. The chain we could say begins with a purpose. The purpose of verse 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. We can just take it again briefly just phrase by phrase. And we know. And we know. We know. We've covered this I think in every series but it comes up again and again in scripture. And I worry perhaps as Christians and as a culture we forget this. There is no such thing as a single, a singular Christian. We can't live as Christians on our own. We can't grow as Christians on our own. Now there's exceptions. There's those who are housebound and there's those who live in communities around the world with no other Christians. The Lord blesses them individually and the Lord deals with them individually. But speaking generally, there is no place for us as Christians to seek to grow by ourselves. We grow together. We grow as community.

The knowing of verse 28, it is we could say community knowledge and we know. Paul of course is writing to this church of Rome, this church which had faced and which would face such terrible persecution.

Grim persecution. We'll touch on that in the weeks ahead. It has real importance for us. As Paul delivers this deep theology, he's not doing it to those who are sitting back and as it were taking notes each week.

He's delivering this to Christians who the following week could find themselves dragged in front of the tribune, stripped, tortured and killed. This was real for these Christians. As Paul promised them and reassured them of the hope that God had for them, he was saying to them as a group. It was them quite literally against the world. It was them against, we could say, the whole Roman Empire. They knew that their enemies were around them, that they lived beside them. Not just enemies to the gospel, but enemies to them personally. That they would be attacked and captured and have, if not their livelihoods, then their very lives destroyed for daring to be Christians. Paul is writing to a Christian community.

And we praise the Lord for his goodness towards us. We have grown up in a community where the gospel is known. But as time goes on, and as we find ourselves in an increasingly secular society, an increasingly secular, non-Christian Tolstair, the truth is, I think, one way or another, we will have to relearn the importance of what it is to be brothers and sisters together. Now, not that that isn't the feeling here.

[8 : 44] Again, Myrtle and Hugh even commented on that. The sense of togetherness and unity is clear to those who come and visit us. But let's never take that for granted. We are to grow together. Almost all, 95% of the promises we find in Scripture are to the church, to God's people, as we grow together and worship together and gather together. Of that five remaining percent, many of them are special cases, individual promises to individual people for individual purposes. But in general, when God speaks, He speaks to His people together. As Paul reminds the struggling church that we know that those who love God and so on, as encouragement for us, we're to remind one another of the promises of these verses.

As our brother prayed, we struggle. And I do feel as a congregation, we're quite good at this, but there's always improvement for all of us, individually and as a church gathering, of sharing that struggle openly.

We're not here just to tick off a box. I know we know that, but do we still act that way? We are here as brothers and sisters. We'll preach that, we'll say yes and amen to that, but do we live our lives perhaps in a way that reflects that as Christians? That's our challenge, isn't it? In the weeks and months and months and months and months and months and months and months and months and months and months and months and months.

And if the Lord wills years ahead of us, Paul is acknowledging the fact here that we all need reminding of the promises of God. The Romans, the Roman church lived in a day and an age where they needed that reminder. We live in a day and an age.

We need reminding constantly that we have a sovereign God who cares eternally for us, who loves us and has loved us from before time and to all time.

[10 : 52] And we know, we know it together, we hold the promise together and we encourage one another in this promise of God. And we know what? What do we know? That for those who love God, who are the recipients of the following promise? What's those who love God? The promises of these verses, it is not as aware an open promise.

This is not the general grace we could say, the mercy that our Lord has for all his creation. We see that common grace. He shows that at restraining mercy. Sin is never as bad as it could be. The world is not as bad as it could be.

God causes day and night and seasons and harvest time to come and to go as it should. The forces of nature and gravity and it all works all the time because God is good to everyone.

But the promise we have here is not an open promise. Who is the promise for? We know that for those who love God.

This promise is a promise given on two conditions. It's only open to people who accept and who know these two conditions. The promise is only open to those who know God and who love God.

[12 : 23] Those who know God and who love God. For those who love God. We proclaim the gospel to everyone. The gospel is for all.

The good news is an open offer. We don't just preach and some denominations do and historically they have and these denominations always die.

The Lord always removes them. Some will still today preach and share that we only share the gospel to those who show an interest. We only share a gospel to those who are living a life in a way that shows that they're perhaps ready to hear the gospel.

That's not what scripture tells us to do. That's not what we're told to do. That's not the great commission. That's not our command. Our command is to share the gospel. The highways and the byways to all and everyone who will hear it.

We are to spread the gospel as wide as we possibly can and we put no restrictions into who we share that gospel with. The gospel is a free offer. A free and open offer.

- [13 : 32] All who thirst. We covered this before during a vacancy. It feels like I'm sure a long time ago, but it does for me anyway. Perhaps not for yourselves, but we covered Isaiah 55.
- We preached and I preached and that and we saw briefly together that the open call of the gospel of grace to all who will hear it. The offer of the gospel is free and we should treat it as such.
- To all friends and family and village and everyone everywhere we can share the gospel with. The gospel offer is open. But the promise and the benefits of the gospel only apply to those who respond and I will see only apply to those who the Lord has called.
- We do not restrict the gospel call. We do not and we should never restrict the gospel sharing. To the most unlikely of candidates in this village, most unlikely of people, because the truth is, even perhaps here this evening, certainly across our island, there are many people sitting in prayer meetings and in church services who love the Lord, who were the most unlikely of candidates.
- The most unlikely of candidates of ever being saved, of ever hearing the gospel, but yet the Lord has saved them. The open, the call of the gospel is free. The call of the gospel is open to all who will hear it.
- [15 : 05] The benefits, the promise is only there for those who respond to that gospel call, to those whom the Lord has called. And it's not for us to deal with the second part.
- We, as it were, only are given the first part. We are to proclaim the gospel to all who will hear it. Who then responds to that gospel call? Who the Lord uses his spirit and his word to work in their lives?
- That's not us. That's above, as it were, our pay grade. We end here. That is his eternal work. That's his job with respect.
- It's not ours. We give out the gospel. But the gospel is only beneficial, efficacious to those who hear it, respond to it, who have been called by the Lord to be transformed.
- The promise isn't open, but the gospel itself very much is. As we go forward, we, as a congregation, are seeking to preach an open gospel to all who will hear it.
- [16 : 19] In the byways and the highways, in every home in this district, with the Lord's help, we will make sure that at least hear the gospel and are invited to hear it week after week.
- We will, going forward as best we can, humanly speaking, together, as brothers and sisters, we will do what we can in this village. In the years to come, the Lord gives us years to make sure that every home, every family, every person hears the gospel message.
- We can compel them to come in, beg them to come in, cry with real tears for them to come in. For the Lord ultimately will do his work in the hearts of his people.
- Then we see the hope of the promise. The hope of the promise. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.
- All things work together for good. All things. That Greek word again, we've had it before. In previous weeks, *panta*. That word is the, again, one of, would not be broadest words they have, they could use in Greek to take in the full swathe of all reality.
- [17 : 38] All things. All, dear brother, dear sister, all your experiences. Your whole existence. Every tear.
- Every tear. Every laugh. Every sad morning. Every impossible morning. Every joyful night. It all is included in all things.
- From every small event which means nothing to you. To every great event which has transformed and perhaps changed your life. All things.

All things. All things. All things. All things. All things. All things. All things. All things. Things good.

Things we have prayed for and things we hope for. Things we have longed for. Which have come to pass. Things bad. Things we hope we would never have to see or endure.

[18 : 33] Or go through or experience. Things planned. Things unplanned. Things we look back on and we try and forget.

And things we can't forget because it gives us so much joy. In the years ahead of us. However long the Lord gives us. The things which will ruin us and bring us to our knees.

And the things that will elate us and cause us to sing and dance for joy. All things. The Lord works together. But notice him working it together.

See we try and work our plans together don't we? We're not having a go here. This is just speaking honestly. We try and work our plans together. Our plans fail.

My plans certainly do. Our plans fail. Our plans are so humanly minded. But of course they are. We can't plan past this moment.

[19 : 32] We plan tonight. We plan tomorrow. We plan next week. We plan the rest of this month. Perhaps the rest of this year. Holidays and things. But we both and we all know that both our plans and expectations can be changed in a second.

Literally that one phone call. That one text message. That one passing moment. And our plans are ripped to shreds.

Our lives are turned upside down. There's no point in going into detail. Because you know yourselves. What has meant in your life. Like what things have cropped up in your life and my life.

That have just derailed us. That have sent our plans just away. We plan to do this. We plan to do this. We plan to do this. And be here. And do this thing with these people.

The place is gone. The people are gone. The plans are gone. So on and so on and so on. We plan by the day. By the week. By the hour. By the year. We praise the Lord.

[20 : 35] And it's his plans. It's his plans we're working on. All things work together for good. His plans are eternal.

We plan by the day. By the year. He has planned from before time itself. To the end of time as we know it. From past eternity. If that even makes sense. Which it doesn't.

To future eternity. Which also doesn't make sense. His plans are eternal. There's no scope to them. Because they encompass all things. At all times.

In all places. Also God's plans as we know ourselves. They include others. Our plans may include ourselves.

Our families. Our friends. Our community perhaps. But God works all things together. And that means using us. And our actions. And our experiences.

[21 : 32] And the lives of those. Who we have no connection to. You'll hear countless stories. And even this past week. I've been a few assembly weeks.

Speaking to a few friends. And a few colleagues. And they're sharing stories. Of how. How passing interactions. Years ago.

Than God used. To bring them. To a saving knowledge of himself. God uses all things. For his glory. All things. Ultimately.

For our good. Now those of us. I'm sure that includes all of us. Who know the Lord. Who have gone through situations. You think. I believe this verse.

I hold to this verse. But Lord. I cannot see. How this situation. Is for my good. I cannot see. If a situation. Could be used. For my good.

- [22 : 28] Or even for your glory. I do not know. I can't begin to grasp. How this could be. Anything else. Other than disaster. For me. For my family. For my health.
- For the congregation. For the domination. So on. So on. It is in fact. I think. And not always. But be honest.
- It is hardly ever. Good. At the time. It is hardly ever. Apparent. At the time. What the Lord is doing. But why would it be? He is dealing.
- In eternity. We are dealing. In day by day. And second by second. We are mortal minds. Dealing in a mortal plane. He is not. He is working.
- All things together. Out with time. Out with. Created reality. He is working. All things together. Perfectly. With that.
- [23 : 22] Honest prayers to God. In times of us doubting. Perhaps. Or feeling distressed. Perhaps. Or feeling. Worried. As to what is taking place. In our lives. We see in scripture.
- Numerous examples. Job comes to mind. But one of many examples. Of men and women. Who are happy to pray to the Lord. And as we are to say. Quite honestly.
- What's going on? This is too much. I can't do this. I can't handle this. This is hard. This is impossible. Life makes no sense. And so on.
- And so on. And so on. God is a loving father. Who loves his people. We will see that more. God willing. Next week. But he is not. Offended. Or surprised.
- Or taken aback. With respect. By his children. Asking him. What's going on. Or his children. Even confessing. That we can't. Understand. That it's too much for us. He knows. He's a compassionate God.
- [24 : 20] He cares for us. Now with that. We have a reminder. And it's so simple. And it's so clear. From the verse. But often. Perhaps we forget it. He's working.
- It all together. For. The good. Of his people. That's not just. A turn off phrase.
- That's God's living word. Telling us. As God himself. Reminds us. Of his people. He. Is. Working. All things. Out.
- For the good of his people. Now. This much I understand. And there's much in the grammar. Which is. Confusing. But. This much.
- I understand. That. The sense of working things out here. Is an ongoing sense. And that much is clear. Even from English. Isn't it? It's an ongoing sense. That all things.
- [25 : 15] From last week. To this morning. To this morning. To God willing. Perhaps next year. Are being worked out together. Can we go day by day. Month and month. Year by year. God does not.
- God sees the end from the beginning. And the beginning from the end. He knows. Our life's trajectory. From now. To next week. To next year. To the end of our lives. We do not.
- But he works. That. Out. With this. He works. This. Out. What took place. Years ago. Tens of years ago. Decades. And decades ago. Even.
- And this providence. And I was thinking of this. Just. As walking down just now. How many people. Grandmothers. Grandfathers. Christians. That have gone before us.
- Long before us. Even their prayers. Are included in this. All things work out. I'm not speaking personally.
- [26 : 11] But just because it makes sense. For me just now. But. I'm in my own granny. Every night. Praying for the whole family on her knees. The whole family. I would hear her. I would sometimes stay over her.
- I would hear her. I would lie in bed. In the room next door. And you'd hear her. Going through every single name. Of all the cousins. And then.

Ending her prayer. And then. Realising she'd forgotten some people. So she'd start praying again. And go through them. And bring them into it. She passed away. Seeing the salvation. Of almost none of these people.

But her own mother. Did the same thing before her. And so on. And Godly people. In this community. Have prayed. For this congregation. Long before we. And many of us.

Were even here. Their prayers. Are included. In the all things. Their life. Their witness. Included. In the all things. All of space.

[27 : 06] And time. All that we know. And see. All that's before us. And after us. All things work together. For the good. Of his people. And for. His glory. Again.

We are dealing in eternity here. But this. Is the confidence. That we have. This evening. As we spend. The Lord's help. The next few weeks. Looking at the following verses.

How does this verse end. All things work together. For good. For those. Who are called. According. To his purpose. God.

Knows. His people. God. Calls. His people. God. God. Sets. His love. On his people. Before time. Itself. And then God. Shows. His love. To us.

In time. In our lives. He saves us. He redeems us. He rescues us. He calls us. And he shows us. But he calls us. His own. All for his purpose.

[28 : 06] His purposes. Will never fail. His purposes. Will never be. As they were. Thwarted. They will never. Not be achieved. This.

Week ahead. In the next few days. Next week ahead. As we go through. All the ups and downs. That this week. May well bring. For any one of us. All the lack of assurance. We may face.

All the doubts. Of faith. Family problems. Personal problems. Health problems. Financial problems. We all know. We all face it all. We face all these things. Being held.

Being known. And being told. That we're loved. By a God. Who will work. All things out. For our good. And that doesn't diminish.

Our sufferings. It doesn't diminish. The pain we feel. In fact. For those of us. Who are his people. Of course. It gives us great comfort. Doesn't it? The pain.

[29 : 02] The worry. The anxiety. The stress. It's not forever. The unsurity. It's not forever. The health worries. It's not forever. But either in time. Or out with time.

Either in time. Or in eternity. All things will be worked out. For his glory. And ultimately. Of course. We see that. The ultimate outworking. Of all things.

Working together. For our good. Is him bringing us. To a. Eternity spent. With him. We don't say that lightly. We don't say that. And when those who are suffering.

And those who. Who are needing comfort. We don't just use this word. This verse. To pepper them. With good thoughts. No. We deal with them. We cry with those who mourn. And we mourn with those who mourn.

And we come alongside those. Who need comfort. But even in our own minds. As we try and comfort our friends. And our families. And comfort even ourselves. These are the verses we have. This is the verse we have in mind.

[29 : 56] That he works all things out. For the good of those. Who love him. For those who are called. According. To his purpose.

Let's bear our heads now. A word of prayer. Oh God we thank you. For the promises we have in your word. These great and glorious promises. Even the promise of the Lord. From these verses this evening.

I pray for any here. Indeed all of us here. Who know you. And who at times find. Such difficulty perhaps. Not in believing the words.

But implying them to ourselves. We believe them perhaps. We accept them. But when we look to our own lives. We see such confusion. And such sadness. And at times. Such misery. Or we confess.

That we find it very hard. To hold to these words. For ourselves. We ask that this week. We'd help each one of us. Afresh. To hold to these words. To love them. And to love the fact. That we have a God. And you tell us.

[30 : 53] And you remind us. That you love us. The God of all eternity. Tells us that he loves his people. You're a God. In your majesty. In your might.

But you have no shame. In calling yourself. A friend. Of your people. And calling yourself. A father. And the God of your people. Help us understand that.

And apply that. That glorious reality. To our everyday lives. Help us Lord. To leave this place tonight. In comfort. And in hope. As we look forward. To one more week Lord.

One more day. One more hour. Whatever it is you grant us. Spent. Knowing that we worship a God. Who is living. And who is active. And a God. Who will bring. To a full knowledge of himself. Of all.

In this place. Who as of yet. Are far away from me. Do pray Lord. For them. For those in this place. In this community. Who have no care for you. Who have no understanding. Of the gospel. For those who as of yet.

[31 : 50] Cannot say that they know Jesus. We ask you to work. Out providentially. Use us. As your people. As salt and light Lord. And bring them. To that saving knowledge. Who would come to know you.

And come to love you. And come to serve you. Let's call these things. In and through. And for. Jesus. Precious name's sake. Amen. We bring our time to conclusion.

By singing to God's praise. From the first psalm we had. Psalm 139. Psalm 139. Of course. That psalm which sings. And reminds us so much.

Of God's keeping. And God's knowledge. Psalm 139. We can sing verses 16. Down to verse 18. Psalm 139.

Verses 16 to 18. When eyes my substance did behold. Yet being unperfect. And in the volume of my book. My members all were writ. These verses to God's praise.

[32 : 43] Come. Come. Come. When eyes my substance did behold.

Yet being unperfect. And in the volume of thy book.

My members all were writ. Which after it continued.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[34 : 24] If I should count them, they stand, they go in numbering.

What time so ever I have wished I ever have with thee.

Amen. In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, with you now and forevermore. Amen.