

All Things Work Together For Good

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: 22 April 2018

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

- [0 : 0 0] And reading at verse 28, verses 28 and 29. 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.
- There are a lot of verses in scripture that almost take our breath away when we read them. Because although we believe them completely, they're almost beyond our understanding.
- And that is certainly true of this particular verse. That God is going to work. That's what he says, that those who love God, all things work together for good.
- And that really is one of the most sublime, amazing, extraordinary verses that we find in scripture. Now, this whole letter of Romans is really quite an amazing letter.
- [1 : 1 6] And Paul, of course, has been dealing with God's great love for his people. And what that means for them. Because Paul doesn't just tell us that God loves us.
- He explains what that actually means in very practical ways. This epistle has been dealing with the great doctrine of justification by faith.
- And what that means for us. And it means that we have union with Christ. And when we have union with Christ, it means that we have peace with God.
- And it also means that when we have peace with God, that we have freedom from the condemnation of the law. That the law can no longer condemn us if we're in Jesus Christ.
- It also means that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is at work within us. Now, if we had read through the chapter, if we had gone back to verse 12, for instance, and we had started there, we would read some of the wonderful things that it means for us to have the Holy Spirit in us.
- [2 : 2 8] For instance, in verse 14, it tells us, For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. So, in other words, every believer who is a son or a daughter, who is adopted by God, has the Holy Spirit leading them.
- That means that we are being led. We are being inclined to the ways of good in order to overcome evil. That doesn't mean that there aren't times that we are guilty of doing evil and wrong.
- But it means that the Holy Spirit is inclined. There is a work going on within us all the time by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also enables us to say, Abba, Father.
- In other words, we can go to God with confidence. He's our Father in heaven. We don't have to sit down and analyze and say, I really wonder if I can go to God.
- I want to call on God. I want to tell God certain things, but I don't know if I can go. Well, the Holy Spirit assures us we can. He's our Father.
- [3 : 3 9] He won't turn us away. And so he gives us this confidence within us to go to him in prayer. The Holy Spirit also gives us hope.

We read about that as we carry on. In the face of what we might call a decaying world and a decaying body. It's one of the things you and I know is that the older we get, and we can't prevent it, that our body is slowing down, and we know that one day it will stop, and we will die.

And it's a very depressing thought, if that's all that we have. But that's one of the wonderful things the Holy Spirit does within us.

The Holy Spirit produces this hope, that this life is not the end, that we have eternal life, and that our body, although the body is decaying, and although we groan, and the very creation is groaning, we have hope.

Because there's going to be a new heaven, and a new earth, and we are going to be renewed. And that's really kind of what separates the Christian faith from so much else.

[5 : 00] Because there's so many people today, and they have no hope. All they have is this world. And they're living in a body that they know is going to give out. And they're living in a world that they know is eventually going to give out.

And they've got nothing. But the Christian has a hope. And it's the Holy Spirit who gives us this hope within our heart, of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, and that we will be renewed.

And so, and also we read, we read that, that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray. Because often we don't know what to pray for. And the Holy Spirit is interceding within us, with groans that, that, that, that, it tells us that.

With groaning too deep for words. The Spirit, that's what it tells in verse 26. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we don't know what to pray for us, we ought.

But the Spirit himself intercedes for us, with groanings too deep for words. And you know, every prayer, that is Spirit motivated, and Spirit led, and every prayer within us, that is driven by the Spirit, will be answered by God.

[6 : 14] Because the Holy Spirit is, the third person of the Godhead. So it is, we have really God praying to God. It's, it's amazing. Sometimes we need to stop, and remind ourselves, what it is we actually have, as Christians.

And so this is what Paul is telling us. We have all these things. And then Paul goes on, and he says in verse 28, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

All things work together for good. For whom does this, amazing statement ring through? Well, Paul tells us, all those, who love God.

And I think, that's the first question, that we have to ask ourselves. Question I have to ask myself. Do I love God? Do you love God? If you love God, then, this verse is true for you.

Then you say to yourself, well how do I know? What if I love God, or if I don't? Well I think one of the things, that it becomes very obvious, and we do know, that a person loves God, once we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 25] But sometimes we ask ourselves, well have I really come to faith, in Jesus Christ? But one of the things, this is, if you love God, you will love the things of God.

In other words, you will love God's word. God's word is not something, that you will close, and keep closed, and maybe open it, if you come to church on a Sunday, and you'll say, oh, I haven't opened this book, since last Sunday, and it's the same every Sunday, you never look in it, until the next one.

Well, those who love God, aren't like that. Because, God's word is so important to them. Because, in God's word, they find, direction, they find help, you find comfort, you find challenges, to yourself, you find, that God is speaking to you.

You know, if you ever have a problem, and if ever there's, anything comes into your life, one of the first places you go to, is God's word. It's not, a long time after, you say, oh, I think I'll pick up the Bible, and see what it's saying.

No, there's an instinct, within your soul, that you go, and you find out, what's God saying to me? I need to hear, what God the Lord will speak. That's why so many people, have different daily readings.

[8 : 42] And sometimes, people will have, readings maybe like, the daily light, where there's a section of verses, or they may, you may have a reading, with a particular verse, and then a wee, exposition on it.

These things are so important. This is God's word, being opened up to you. It's part of your delight. And it's an evidence, that you actually, love God.

And it's the same, coming to God's house. It's one of the things, you love to do. I joyed, went to the house of God. Go up, they said to me. God's day is important to you.

Because it's this day, that the Lord has given to you. And it's this day, where you're able to lay aside, other things. And you say, you know, I want to meet with the Lord today. When you come to God's house, that's one of the things you want.

You want something for your soul. Because, there's a, in God's people, there is a spiritual hunger. Just as we have a natural hunger for food, the Christian has a natural hunger, that's spiritual.

[9 : 43] And you say, I want something, I need, I need something for my soul today. Lord, give me something. Even just a, even just a wee crumb, even if it's in the singing, or in the reading, or, something that's, in the sermon, just give me something, to keep me going, a little, little token, a little something.

And these are all evidences, that we love the Lord. We love the things. We love God's people. We love his cause. His cause is important to us. All these things.

And, again, if you're a believer, one of the things you say, is that you want to become, more like Jesus. And one of the things, that was so evident, in the life of Jesus, was he was somebody, who loved God the Father.

He loved him, with all his being. And that is surely true, of you and me. That we also, love the Lord. And, I think also, one of the things, that highlights, our love for the Lord, is when we let him down, we feel sad.

In other words, when we sin, when we, when we disobey God, it brings, you know, there's a hurt in our heart, because we know, we've hurt him.

[11 : 04] When you love someone, you don't want to, you don't deliberately, go out of your way, to do what you know, is going to hurt them. And when you do things, that hurt them, it hurts you, that you've done that.

And that's how it is, with the Lord. And you go to the Lord, and you say, I'm sorry. You know Lord, that I want to obey you, but sometimes, I end up, and I disobey you. I do my own thing, I go my own way, and Lord, forgive me.

This again, is evidence, of those who love the Lord. Because you're wanting, to do what he wants you to do. You're wanting, to obey his law. And so, all these things, indicate to us, our love for the Lord.

Now as we know, we're a work in progress. The Christian, is a work in progress. And you know, one of the wonderful things, is this. There are two amazing things. The first amazing thing is, that God, in Jesus Christ, comes into your life.

That, is amazing. But you know, the other amazing thing is, that the Lord, doesn't leave you, as he found you. Isn't that amazing? It would be, one wonder, it would be an amazing thing, if the Lord, came into your life, and said, you know something?

[12 : 19] I'm going to save you. I'm going to save you, from your sin, and I'm going to take you, to heaven. And that's it. And he would leave you, just like that. But he doesn't.

He says, you know, I'm going to save you. But I'm going to, keep on working in you, and I'm going to change you, every single day. Every day, every week, every month, every year.

I am at work in you, and I am going to change you. And then we have to, ask ourselves, how do we love God?

How does it all begin? Well, we're told here, that we're called, that's what it says. We know that, for those who love God, all things work together, for good, for those who are called, according to his purpose.

So you see, it all began, with God. It wasn't that one day, you got up and said, you know what? I think today, I'm going to start loving God. That's what I'm going to do, for the rest of my life.

[13 : 19] I am now going to, from today on, I am going to love God. That's not how it begins. God, it begins with God.

We love him, because he first loved us. He called us. And, this is a wonderful thing. For those who are called, according to his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined. And, it's in here, we have the whole idea, of a destiny. You know, people are always talking, about their destiny.

Ah, you know, I'm trying to work out, my own destiny. I wonder what my destiny, holds for me. People always want to know, the future. Well, God alone knows, your future.

He, has a, pre, destiny, for you. He, has worked this out, long ago. You are a Christian today, because God, worked out this long ago, and his great destiny, for you, was in order, that you would become, a believer.

[14 : 28] And, that, for a Christian, is a most incredibly, comforting thing. That, I'm following the Lord, not because, ultimately, one day, I decided, to follow God, or one day, it came about, God looked at, down, and he said, ah, you know, this person's not too bad, I think, I'll, I think, make him a Christian.

No. It is because, of his, he foreknew, his foreknowledge. Now, this word, foreknew, or foreknowledge, is not the idea, that God, from all eternity, knew what kind of people, we're going to be.

It means, this word, foreknew, foreknowledge, is an incredibly, intimate word. It means, that he knew, not only, that he knew us, in order to love us.

In the biblical term, this, to know, is the most intimate, and powerful, intimacy, that can be. It's a knowledge, that a husband, and wife, would have one, with another.

And this is what, the Lord is saying, this is what Paul, is telling us. That the Lord, had this love for us, before ever we were, and that his great purpose, for us, was this.

[15 : 53] He says, do you know, what I want to do with you? I want to make you, like my son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that incredible? So that the Lord, comes into our lives, in power, with an irresistible power, that breaks down, every opposition, and every barrier.

And you and I know, that in our lives, we had lots of oppositions, and barriers, to the kingdom of God. If you're like me, you went through years, where you heard the gospel, you heard it being preached, you heard the invitations, come unto me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

You knew all these things, but it came in, and went out, it drifted in, it didn't really affect you, it didn't really matter. Some days it did matter, but you didn't do anything about it.

But then one day, it changed. Because you heard, you heard in a different way. God really began to work in your heart.

He began to draw you. And it became attractive. The gospel became attractive. Christ became attractive. God's word became, so needful for you.

[17 : 14] You know, it's very important for us, to dwell on this fact, because you and I, look around, and there are people, and you say to yourself, you know, there's no point really, sharing the gospel with them, because they wouldn't be interested.

Can you imagine, him or her, following the Lord? Because they've got no interest. They've got no interest at the moment. But you know, this is what God does.

He changes hearts. There were times in your life, you had no interest. You're following the Lord today, and you're more interested in him, than ever you were. And that's why, if you're here today, without Jesus Christ, you might be saying to yourself, I could never be a Christian.

I couldn't keep going on that. I couldn't, week in, week out, keep going, because I don't really have the appetite, I don't have the heart. He will give it to you.

He will give you that appetite. That's what he does. He changes people's hearts, so that what you didn't particularly want, you now want. And, the great example is the person who wrote this, the Apostle Paul.

[18 : 27] Paul was somebody who couldn't stand the Lord Jesus Christ. Talk of not having an appetite for Christ. He hated Christ with that venom. And now, there's nobody in all the world, so precious to the Apostle Paul, as the Lord Jesus Christ.

He gives his whole life, to proclaiming Jesus Christ. And that's what Jesus does. That's what God does. He changes our heart.

He changes our will. He changes our affections. He changes our understanding, so that what we didn't want, we now want. And that's God's destiny for you.

That's his purpose for you. That's a great thing. It's not something that we just make up ourselves. And so, we're following the Lord, because of this great desire, this love that he has put within our heart.

And, we see the purpose of God's destiny for us, is to be conformed, conformed to the image of his Son. You know, today, that's God's purpose for you.

[19 : 40] You might have different purposes for yourself today. You might be actually sitting here, and you're saying to yourself, right, oh my God, what, I've got so much in my mind. I'm trying to work out this next week.

And you have purposes and plans. And you're trying to work it out. God says, I'm not, yes, I know about your purposes and plans, but I have one primary purpose and plan for your life.

Your destiny is this. I am at work in you, conforming you, to the image of my Son, Jesus Christ. That's it.

Above anything else. And every single thing that comes into your life, from A to Z, I am going to use all these things, in the shaping, and in the molding, and in the conforming of you, to my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It really is quite extraordinary. That's why it tells us, 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.

[20 : 52] God is gathering a huge family. A massive family. And Jesus is the elder brother. Jesus, for you as a believer today, Jesus is, we can term in one sense, your elder brother.

And you know what's happening? A family, you know what, you know within family, you see resemblances. People say, oh it's in the people. Oh it's in their genes. You see family resemblances.

You see traits, characteristics, the lookalikes. Well that's how it is, in the family of God. And, God is at work, making you, enabling you, to resemble Jesus Christ, more and more.

And even today, you may say to yourself, I don't feel like Jesus Christ. Be assured of this, one day, you will mirror him. You will mirror, perfectly, the image, of Jesus, who is your Savior.

Isn't that an amazing thought? And that's God's purpose, that's his destiny. You might be saying, what's my destiny? That is your destiny. That's what God, is at work doing.

[22 : 09] And so, for those who love God, all things work, together, for good. Isn't that amazing? That doesn't mean, that everything, that comes into your life, is good.

Far from it. There are many things, that are sad, evil, sinful, wicked, painful, sorrowful. The list is endless, of things, that come into your life, that aren't good.

Awful things. Things, if you could have, in any way possible, have done anything, to stop coming into your life, you would. But the amazing thing, is that God takes, all these things, and he works for good.

There are many, illustrations, that we could find, from that in the Bible. You could go to the life of David, or the life of Joseph, or the life of Jacob. You think of Jacob, there was a point in his life, and do you know what he said?

He said, all these things, are against me. Do you remember, that particular time, the brothers had gone, the famine was in, in Canaan, the brothers had gone, down to Egypt.

[23 : 20] Joseph recognized them, he said, I'm going to test them, see what they're like now. And so he said, is this a lot of you? Are there any more of you? He said, I think you're spies.

Or they said, there's one more brother, we've got one more brother at home. He says, I don't believe, what he said, what I'm going to do is, I'm going to take one of you, and he took Simeon, and he said, I'm going to keep this brother, in prison.

Until you all come back, with a brother, you say you have at home. So the brothers, had to go back, and they said to Jacob, see that, leader in Egypt, the only way we can get any more grain, is next time we go back, we have to take Benjamin as well.

And poor Jacob, is beside himself with sorrow. And he said to them, Joseph, I have lost, because he saw the, Joseph's coat, remember, years back, covered in blood.

Joseph, I've lost. Simeon is now, I've lost him. Now you're going to take Benjamin, away from me. We've got nothing but famine, in the land.

[24 : 30] All these things, are against me. And so it would appear, because if you or I, had been in Jacob's situation, I think we would have said, exactly the same thing.

Move it forward, and not too far down the line, we will find Jacob being settled, with all his family, with Jacob, with Joseph being restored, with Simeon being taken out of prison, all of them settled, in the best part of Egypt, with plenty to eat.

What was happening? God was at work, working all things for good, for Jacob, for Joseph, for Israel, for their future. And that's how God works, all the time.

Right now, you might not be able, to see some of the things, that have come into your life, or understand, and how, in any way, it could be true, this verse could be true of you.

But actually, God, will work it. You might not see it, in this world, but you will see it, yet. Be absolutely persuaded of it. This is what he does.

[25 : 46] And he takes all these things, the days of the rain, and the days of the sun, the days of the pain, and the days of the joy, the dark times, the bright times.

He takes them all together, and he works it all, for good, for those who love him. Great question is, do you, today, love the Lord?

If you do, this verse, is true, for you. All your past, all your present, all your future, God, is at work, in it all.

If you don't love God, as things stand, unfortunately, this is not true. But it can be. Because you go to him, today, and you say to him, Lord, right, I need to come inside.

I'm on the outside. I need, to get in. Ask me in. Give me, give me the strength, to come in. Give me the grace, to come in.

[26 : 52] Give me the faith, to believe. Help me, Lord, to believe. Do you know this? If you really ask that, he will give that faith to you.

And then this promise, will be true, for you as well. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we give thanks for, the amazing word, that we have, in scripture.

And so often, it baffles us, and we cannot get our head rounded, pointing to the fact, that you are so much greater, than we are. In fact, you highlight, that distance of greatness, in measuring it, and just as the heavens, are so much higher, than the earth, so are your ways, and your thoughts, and our ways, and our thoughts.

And help us then, Lord, to submit before you, and to believe you. Grant us your grace, we pray in everything. Uphold us, and keep us, and take us, to our home safely.

Bless the cup of tea, and coffee in the hall afterwards, and forgive us, out every sin, in Jesus name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing, in Psalm number 62, 62, the 62nd Psalm, page 294, and the tune is Glasgow, verses 5 to 8, My soul, wait thou with patience, upon thy God alone.

[28 : 27] On him dependeth all my hope, and expectation. He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he. He only is my sure defense, I shall not move it be.

In God my glory, blessed is, and my salvation sure. In God the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure. Ye people, place your confidence, in him continually, before him pour you, out your heart.

God is the refuge high. These verses of Psalm 62, the tune is Glasgow, My soul, wait thou with patience. My soul, wait thou with patience, upon thy God alone.

On him dependeth all my hope, and expectation.

He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is he.

[29 : 50] He only is my true defense, I shall not move it be.

In God my glory, blessed is, and my salvation sure.

God the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure.

ye people, ye people, ye people, place your confidence, in him continually.

God the blue angel. My Lord is Christ, the Lord, Lord, yah sea, the river go take, my mercy, We may hail to see you, still, but heaven are here.

[31 : 12] Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.