

Romans 8

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 25, 2018

Before we start the sermon this morning, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is I tried Dubbel Zout this week. Yeah, I was really disappointed, because that's called a candy, and you just need to label it something else. It's made out of, I think, licorice and concrete and just avoid it. If you see the term "Dubbel Zout," if you've tried it before, you know what I mean. The good news is that next week we have a wonderful Easter service for you, so please be here if you can. We're going to have some special things with the kids as well. Richard Procee is going to read the Easter story to our little ones during the service, so to just let you know that.

Also, some more good news as well. Some of you might have heard, Richard Caldwell is going to be joining us in the end of May, May 26th through 27th. Some of you remember the name Richard Caldwell. Before I came, the church was meeting and then watching DVDs, and this was the ministry they were watching. He's from Texas and he's going to come and do a men's conference for us and also speak to us on a Sunday. May 26th and 27th - put that on your calendars. That's going to be a wonderful time, and we'll give you some more information closer to that. But that's good news, amen? You guys excited about that? Well, I'm excited about it, so I hope my excitement made up for the Dubbel Zout experience earlier this week.

Well, you can go ahead and turn your Bibles to the book of Romans. And as you're doing that, this morning we're in a middle of a series called The Book of Romans in Three Months where we're looking at the book of Romans over a three-month or 12-week period of time. We started back in February and we plan on finishing it next month. That's the plans anyway. It's kind of a brief overview of the book so you can get the main idea and the big picture.

Now, I was talking to someone from our church the other day who said, "I never really got the book of Romans before. I never really liked it, because I got lost in the details." Well, that's why we're going through it like this, so you don't get lost in the details, so you can see it from a bird's eye view. Someone else told me they struggled with understanding how chapters like Romans four and Romans seven fit into the book. They couldn't quite understand how the pieces fit together. And that's why we're going through the book like this, so you can see how the pieces fit, so you can get the main idea.

And the main idea of Romans (as we've said many times before) is found in chapter 1:16. You might have memorized this verse by now. I've read it so many times to you. But this is the gist of the book in one verse is as Paul says, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Romans is about the power of God for salvation. It's about the gospel of the good news that Jesus changes lives.

I told you last week about the painting in Chicago called The Rock of Ages that showed a man clinging to a cross that was firmly embedded in the rock. And as the wind blew and beat against him, he held on, and he was saved. That's what this book is about. It's about holding on to the cross and being saved.

I also told you several years after that first painting appeared, another one showed up portraying the same man holding onto the cross, except this time, he had another hand reaching down to save someone else who was drowning. That's what this book is about as well. It's about saving others. It's about reaching down and pulling people out of the storm, and I want to say a few words about this, because I think it's so important.

Researchers estimate there's something like 95% of Christians that have never led someone to the Lord, 95%. And 61% never share their faith on a regular basis. One out of five don't pray for the lost ever - it never even enters the minds. 48% never invite them to church. And it's because of these statistics...and statistics can be a little misleading...but because of this, George Barna and his research team said this about what they found. They said, "The bottom line is that millions of Christians remain committed to evangelism, but we have a growing apathy toward it."

In all fairness, it appears that the Christian community has lost its urgency for the lost. I think we would all agree with that, wouldn't we? We've lost the sense of urgency for the lost. We have a growing apathy. In fact, I bet if I went around the room and asked you, "When was the last time you evangelized someone?", some of you couldn't remember. And I don't say that to embarrass anybody, I just say it to point out that we've got a problem. We're forgetting to reach down and pick people up out of the storm.

I think this is important, because we've forgotten how important this is to God. We're forgetting how much He likes to do this. The Bible says God loves to save sinners. The Bible says this is what He does. He seeks and He saves that which is lost. This is His passion. This is His drive. This is what the whole Bible is about from start to finish. John 3:16, probably the most famous passage in the Bible says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

God sent Jesus to save sinners. Our religion is based around the idea of saving sinners. The Bible says the second time Jesus will come back to judge the world, this time He came to save it. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 9, He said, "It's not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. For I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." If you wondered "What did Jesus come to do?", He came to call sinners.

Just a few more passages on this, because it ties exactly into what we're talking about this morning. Ephesians 2 is a wonderful verse on this. Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ." If you think about it, some men are rich in money, that's where they keep their riches. Some men are rich in cars, you see them driving around Vancouver in their Lamborghinis and Ferraris. Some men are rich in land. The Bible says, "God is rich in mercy." That's what matters to God, compassion and mercy.

In fact, Luke 15, I'll read one more passage to you. Verse ten says, "In the same way, I tell you, there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." If you think of all the things that the angels could rejoice in, you think of all the things they could delight in that the

Bible says, "They delight in a sinner who repents." Because that's the kind of God we serve. I think we don't evangelize like we should because we forget that. We lose our sense of urgency for the lost because we forget how important this is to God. God loves to forgive. That's what He loves to do.

In his commentary on Matthew, John MacArthur tells a story of a lighthouse that became famous for saving ships. And the men who worked there would often row out in the storm and risk their lives to bring people safely to shore. In return, the people showered them with gifts. They gave the lighthouse gifts in money and goods to the point that the workers in the lighthouse became lazy. And the lighthouse actually became like a country club, according to the story.

They had pictures on the walls of them saving people, and they had emblems of ships going out in the storm, but that's all it was. And it got to the point that, one day, a large ship wrecked off the coast of the lighthouse, and nobody did anything about it. They all stayed comfortable in their country club. And I think that can happen in a church, can't it? That can happen in the body of Christ.

We can get so comfortable in here, that we forget to go out there to reach people. We can get so apathetic in here, that we forget to help those who are perishing. C.T. Studd, the famous missionary said, "Some want to live within a sound of a church bell." He said, "I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell." I wonder, have any of you even been within a yard of hell lately? I mean, have any of us even gone close to the lost?

John Wesley said, "You have one business on earth, and that is to win souls." One more quote, I like this one, (this was kind of really challenging to me this week) Oswald J. Smith said, "The church that doesn't evangelize fossilizes." Those are two choices, we fossilize or we evangelize. This is why Paul spent so much time writing about this in the book of Romans, because he wants us to get this. He wants us to understand how important this is to God.

To my knowledge, Romans is the only book Paul wrote to a church he had never visited before, to a church of total strangers, and he writes about this subject. He writes about the gospel, so we won't dry up and die. We won't fossilize.

Just to walk you through what he says so far in Romans one through three. He says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God but are justified freely by His grace. It means all have sinned. All have fallen short of His requirements, but we can be justified freely if we trust in Jesus Christ.

Then, in chapters four through five, Paul shows us what this looks like in the Old Testament. He tells us what this looks like in the lives of Abraham and Adam. He says, "Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. Adam did not believe, and he plunged the whole human race into sin," which Paul goes on to elaborate in chapter six through seven. He says, "This is what sin looks like." In chapter 6:1, he says, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so the grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" We're not to live in sin anymore.

But then he goes on in chapter seven to say, "But that's really, really hard," if you guys remember from last week. Fighting sin is very, very difficult. He says at the end of the chapter in verse 24, towards the end he says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This leads us to chapter eight.

In Romans eight, Paul summarizes all he has said so far. And he goes back and he puts these chapters together, and he says it like this in verse one of Romans eight. (This is summarizing all he has said for the first seven chapters). He says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If you noticed, he starts off with the word "therefore" which is a summary statement. This is summarizing all those first seven chapters. Since all have sinned and fallen short, but can be justified, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation."

In other words, there is no judgment. There is no punishment for those who are in Christ. I think you all understand that if you believe in Jesus, there is no punishment for you. If you trust in Him, there is no judgment. That's all been paid for in Christ. That's why we evangelize. This is what we tell people.

But not only that, if you've seen verse two Paul says that if you trust in Him, you receive the Spirit. (And I'm just going to fly through this because I want to get to the end of the chapter with you). But verse two says, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." And then he goes on to explain what the law of the spirit looks like.

If you trust in Christ, you get the Holy Spirit, and here's what it looks like. In verse five, it helps you fight sin. In verse ten, it makes you alive because of righteousness. In verse 14, the Spirit makes you a son of God. In verse 16, He testifies that you are God's son. In verse 23, the Spirit will redeem your body. In verse 26, He will intercede for you.

Then, Paul says this in verse 28. (This is what I'm getting at. Some say this is the most important passage in the book. Thanks for hanging in there with me going through chapter eight by the way). Some say this is the crux of the whole thing in verse 28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." In other words, God does all of these for your good. He saved you, He justified you. He gave you the Son and the Spirit for your good.

I don't know if you've been around a lost person lately, but the one thing it seems like we need in this world (and I've said this before) is some good news. You guys been around any lost people lately and you hear them talk, and what do they have to look forward to? Paul says if someone is in Christ, God causes all things to work together for good.

That's another time you see the word "all". That word "all" is used a lot in the book of Romans. "All" have sinned, but for those who trust in Christ, "all" things can work together for their good. Some of your translations say, "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good," but the meaning is the same, as we'll see in a minute. God does it all.

It's been said that God is an infinite God. This means that whatever He is, He is infinitely. And if He loves, He loves infinitely. If He forgives, He forgives infinitely. He never runs out of it. He

never gets tired of forgiving. If you're like me, you'll really wrestle with this. There's times when you want to say, "Look, I've forgiven you this much, and that's it. You're done." God never says that.

You really see that in the book of Romans, by the way. We sinned in Romans one through three. Paul makes that very clear. And then Adam sins in Romans five, but God saves us from that. He gives us Jesus, and we still continue to sin in Romans six through seven. Romans six through seven is about a Christian struggling with sin. Then, in chapter eight, He gives us the Spirit. And what do we do then? We still sin. It's sin upon sin upon sin. It's failure upon failure upon failure in the book of Romans, and God still forgives. He still loves us. He never runs out of it. He causes all things to work together for our good, even though we do bad. That's what this is about.

There's a story told of an elderly man who was asked to give his testimony at church. And as he walked to the podium, he humbly told the people how God had sought him and bought him and changed him. He told them how God called him and loved him and brought him to Himself. God did it all. He deserved all the credit for his salvation.

After he got done with his testimony, a young man came up to him and said, "Look, I really appreciate all you said about God. I really was blessed by that." He said, "But I'm confused because you never said anything about yourself. What did you do?" The old man said, "You know what? You're right. I sinned. So, that's what I did. I sinned. I failed. I blew it, and God did the rest."

That's what this passage says. This is the point of it. We sin, and God does the rest. We blow it, but God causes all things to work together for our good because that's the kind of God we serve and that's the thing we need to be telling lost people. This is the kind of God you're not going to find anywhere in the world. You're not going to find it in other religions. You're not going to find it at the local library. You won't find it in movies. This is something totally unearthly.

In fact, Romans eight has been called the greatest chapter in the Bible and crown jewel of it because I don't think you couldn't make this stuff up, if it wasn't from God. But let's talk about it some this morning. Let's look at what it says.

In Romans eight starting in verse 28, Paul says that God causes three things to work together for our good. If you're taking notes, this is our outline. As Paul is summarizing the book of Romans and putting it into one handful of verses here, giving us this crown jewel, he gives us three things that work together for our good. And the first one...this is a little bit heady, but I'm going to walk you through it...the first one is: time and eternity.

The first thing that God causes to work together for our good is time and eternity; this life and the next, this world and the next. What I mean by this is that our salvation was not decided in time. It was decided in eternity. All these things in Romans one through seven, Paul says was not decided at the last minute. It wasn't like we sinned and God said, "Oh, no, what am I going to do now?" He knew exactly what He was going to do.

Maybe you say this in other way (and this is one point we'll get to later in the passage, but I think it's important to mention this here), your salvation is eternally secured because it was decided in eternity. There's nothing that happens to you in this life that can make you lose it. And if you read in verse 28, Paul says this. He says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined."

Now, we need to stop there and just say a few words about those last two words because they are a little bit heady, a little deep. The word "foreknow" in the Greek is *prosginosko* which comes from the word *pros* which is "before" and *ginosko*, which means "to know". It means to know something before, or to have a prior knowledge of it.

If you notice in verse 28 or verse 29, Paul uses it in reference to people. And what I mean by that is, he doesn't say "For those things He foreknew.", He says, "For those whom He foreknew". That's a reference to people. He didn't just know facts about people. He knew people beforehand. This is the kind of knowledge when we say a man knows his wife. He doesn't just know stuff about his wife. He knows his wife intimately, personally. In a similar way, Paul says, "God knew us intimately beforehand. He had a relationship with us before we were born," or "He chose to."

This is what the word "predestined" means. He goes on in verse 29, and he says, "For those whom he foreknew He also predestined." That's the Greek word, *proorizo* which comes from the word *pros* "before" and *orizo* "to decide". Both of those two words in Greek sound alike. They don't sound alike in English, but both of them start with the word *pros*, the word "before"; "before knowledge, before decision". *Proorizo* means "to decide beforehand" or "to choose beforehand".

"God chose us beforehand" is the idea here. He decided to know or have a relationship with us before we were born. It wasn't just a relationship on God's part now, Paul says it was a decision. It wasn't just a knowing. It was a choosing that He made. And he goes on in verse 29 to tell us what this leads to. He starts off that way, and he goes on to explain what happens next.

In verse 29, he says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the first born among many brethren. And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

The scholars refer to this as "the golden chain of salvation". This is the chain of events that God used to save us and bring us to heaven. Others referred to it (or they used this term) in relation to some of the stuff as the *Ordo Salutis* or "the order of salvation," because as you can see, there's an order to this. There's a progression of events here. God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us and glorified us. It's one right after another.

If you noticed, it's in the past tense, which means this is a certain thing. It's as good as done to God. They're all lined up consecutively, which is a little bit confusing because some actually happened at once or they seemed to. What I mean is verse 29 says that God foreknew and

predestined us, that happened in eternity past. The exact order of that, we don't really know. We don't really know exactly what will happen in eternity past, but that's when those things happen.

Then verse 30 says, "He called us and justified us in time." That calling there is an effectual calling, calling to salvation. When God called us, He justified us. That was an instantaneous thing. Then, it says that "those whom He justified, He also glorified," which is a reference to the future. This is what will happen one day in heaven. We will see God's glory there. We will have glorified bodies there.

But the good news (going back to what I said earlier and Paul's point in this passage) is that this is a certain thing to God. This is as good as done to Him. If God foreknows you, He will justify you, period. That's Paul's point here. If He predestines you, He will glorify you, no matter what happens, no matter what may come your way. The golden chain will not be broken. The *Ordo Salutis* will not be stopped because God can't be stopped. God can't be resisted eternally. Isaiah 14:27, says, "For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? He has stretched out His hand, and who can turn it back?"

And I need to say a few words about this, because it can be a confusing doctrine for some. This is a doctrine that can cause problems, so let me just maybe make a few comments about this that hopefully will help.

One is that, if you noticed, this is not supposed to be a controversial doctrine. This is supposed to be a comforting doctrine. Do you see that in the Scripture? The doctrine of predestination, foreknowledge, election, sovereignty of God, that's caused a lot of controversy in the church. And unfortunately, that's not the way, or fortunately, that's not the way Paul is bringing it up here. This is supposed to encourage us, supposed to bring us hope. Paul is saying that this is how bad God wants to save us. This is how passionate He is about forgiving sinners. He's been thinking about it from before time. He's been planning it out from before we were born, and I can't think of any more encouraging than that. This is the point of it. You can't lose your salvation because it doesn't depend on you, it depends on God. It doesn't rest on your shoulders. It rests on His.

And you read Romans seven (we went through all that stuff last week if you remembered Romans seven) and you think, "I'm going to mess this up." Right? "I'm going to blow it. There's no way I could do this." Paul writes Romans eight to say you can't mess it up, because it doesn't depend on you. He says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." That means you will be conformed to the image of His Son if you're in Christ. You will be saved.

Let me also point out that this is a humbling doctrine. This stuff here humbles us to the dust. A lot of people take this stuff about foreknowledge and predestination to be a cause of pride. We call them the "frozen chosen". I don't know if you guys ever heard of the frozen chosen, baptized in vinegar, that sound familiar? No? Okay, well on your way home you might laugh. I think that was pretty funny. But they say that "We're the elect. We're chosen, so we're better than everyone else. We're up here. Everybody else is down there."

That's the opposite of what Paul is saying here. Paul says that we're so far down here that if God didn't choose us, we never would have chosen Him. If He didn't predestine us, we never would be saved. That's what Romans 8:7 says, if you want to look there. (We flew over a lot of this to get to our passage for this morning). But in Romans 8:7-8...Actually let me start in verse six, he says, "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so."

Paul says a fleshly mind, a lost mind, is not even able to subject itself to the law of God. The word "able" there implies ability. And we couldn't subject ourselves to God even if we wanted to, so God predestines us in order to save us. That's what the elderly man meant when he said, "I sinned. That's all I did. God did the rest." This is a humbling passage.

If you read a passage like this and get proud over it, I encourage you to read it again, because you didn't understand it. Now, if you read the passage like this and say, "I'm better than everyone else," then you need to get a better Bible translation, because you didn't get it the first time. And this is also humbling because we can't fully understand it. And I won't go into that now, but we'll talk about it next time we get into Romans nine.

But let me also point out one more thing about this doctrine by way of maybe clarification. This is an evangelistic doctrine, and what I mean by that is not that you should use it when you evangelize, but it should motivate you to evangelize. It should encourage you to go out and reach the lost, because it says that God is doing that. Do you see that? God is calling sinners to Himself, and if you go out to call them, you're in the business that God is in.

The only thing is you just don't know who the sinners are, right? They don't have an "F" on their forehead for "foreknown" or a "P" for "predestined". It's not on there. We don't know who they are. God does. That's up to Him, but it's our job to preach the gospel to everyone.

William Carey is considered by some to be the father of modern missions. He was the first one to take support from England and America and use it for missions work overseas. In 1792, he started the Baptist Missionary Society to reach the people of India. And after seven years on the mission field, he had nothing to show for it. He didn't even have a single convert, getting up every day, going to work, preaching the gospel, nothing to show for it.

And he wrote a letter back home expressing his frustration, and he said, "I'm almost dried up by discouragement and I've been tempted to go to my work like a soldier expecting defeat." He said, "My fellow missionaries and I often say, 'If we just had one Christian Indian with whom we could converse ...' He said, "But I hope you will not be discouraged by our little positive success but rather regard it as a call to double exertion and send us more men. India must be among the nations which shall call Him blessed."

And he goes on in the letter to say that God is calling sinners, and India is full of sinners, so let's go there and preach the gospel to them and see what God will do. That kept him going. That kept him from giving up. In fact, by the time of his death, there were a thousand Christians in India that could all point themselves back to the work of William Carey.

This is an evangelistic doctrine in the sense that it encourages us to evangelize. Hudson Taylor used it for his work in China. George Whitefield in England. David Brainerd drew strength from this passage when he was ministering to the Indians in Pennsylvania. Adoniram Judson did it with the people in Burma. Missionaries throughout the years have turned to this for strength and hope, and we need to do that as well. God is calling sinners, and, therefore, we need to be doing that as well.

I could say more about that but let me give you another thing God works together for our good. We'll just keep going through the passage here. Another one is this. First one is time and eternity. The second thing God works together for our good is: circumstances. He uses circumstances to work together for our good. He uses situations that we face and crises that come up in life, sometimes very dark ones.

As Paul is writing about the goodness of God, and God causing all things for good, he mentions several dark situations that come up. And he does it with some questions. He gives us seven rhetorical questions in the rest of this passage here. (And I'm going to go through these quickly with you). The first is found in verse 31. Here's the first rhetorical question. He says, "What then shall we say to these things?" That's a reference to all Paul has said so far. Since God foreknows us and predestines us, since He calls us and justifies us and glorifies us, since He causes all things to work together for our good, what then shall we say to these things? "What's the result of all these," Paul says.

And he answers it with a question. He says, "If God is for us, who is against us?" That's the conclusion of all these. That's the answer. If God is on our side, who can defeat us? And the answer is no one. John Knox said, "God plus one equals a majority." That's what Paul says here. If God is on your side, you have a majority, and you will win.

And he ties this into our justification with a few more questions in verse 32. If you remember, justification is very important to Paul in the letter of Romans. He says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns?"

Paul says, "God should condemn you. He should send you to hell. He should bring a charge against you because you have sinned. But He doesn't do that, and said He offers His own Son for you. He forgives you. He delivers you from all of that, so who's going to condemn you?" he said. "Who's going to charge you?" Again, he answered, "No one."

And then he asked two more questions to sum it up in verse 35, "Who will separate us from the love of God? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And then he quotes from Psalm 44 to say, "For your sake, we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But all these is another way of saying nothing can harm you if you were in Christ. Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

If you notice, that's a pretty nasty list in verse 35: tribulation, distress, persecution. Famine: that means you don't have any food. Nakedness means you're too poor for clothes. Some Christians in

the first century were too poor to afford clothes. Sword is a word for violence. Paul says, "None of that can take you away from the love of God."

As a matter of fact, we could say it like this, "You can't be unjustified." It's impossible. It doesn't work that way. Once you're justified, you're justified. You're saved. You can't be "un-predestined". It doesn't even make sense. No matter how bad your circumstances get, no matter how trying they are, they can't change that. Again, your salvation is decided before time and time is not going to do away with it.

We're kind of ... I don't know if it's fair to say this or not, but I think it's fair to say this, compared to early Christians, we're pretty soft. I mean, persecution for us is our air conditioner breaks in the summer. Persecution for these guys is they didn't have clothes or food. And Paul says, "As bad as that gets, it doesn't mean God won't love you. Nothing could even keep God from loving you."

Let me say a few words about this because maybe some of these might be a little confusing as well. This is another doctrine, the doctrine of eternal security that can be a little confusing, just a few thoughts on this one. This doesn't mean you're saved by works, because you're saved by grace. If you notice this whole passage is about grace, grace, grace, grace. It's been said the only one who is worshiped in heaven is God. And this is why, because this is all of Him. He's the hero of this story, not you. He's the one who takes the credit.

I just mentioned William Carey to you but when William Carey was on his deathbed, one of his followers said, "Dr. Carey, look at all you did for the Lord," unto which William Carey replied, "You're looking in the wrong place. You need to be talking about what all the Lord did for me." He said, "When I die, don't say one word about William Carey. Talk about my Saviour." We're all going to say that. The bragging rights go to Him. The glory goes to Him. "If you make it through all of these trials," Paul says, "at the end of it, you will give glory to God." which leads to another thing to clarify.

This doesn't mean that your salvation will be pretty. It's interesting you read verses 28 through 30 and you think, "All right, I'm good. It's going to be a cakewalk," right? "Okay, God's predestined me. He's foreknown me, called, justified, glorified. Golden chain of salvation won't be broken. All right, I'll kick my feet back up. I'm going to watch a ballgame."

Paul goes on to say, "It's not what it's going to look like." There are going to be some ugly days in the Christian life. And God causing all things to work together for our good may look pretty rough at times. Predestined doesn't mean easy, it means preserved. Foreknown doesn't mean easy, it means secure. God has secured your place in heaven. He's preserved it, but the road to get there is going to be narrow.

It's been said there are no gravy trains to glory. A.H. Strong, a Christian theologian said, "The Christian is like a man making his way uphill, who occasionally slips back, yet he always has his face towards the summit." Slips and falls, plants on the ground sometimes, but he always looks toward the top. Charles Spurgeon said, "The believer may fall again and again onboard the ship, but he will never fall over board because God won't let him."

And tying this into what we said at the beginning, this is another encouragement for evangelism because this means you can offer people something real. You can offer them real salvation. God will really save them from their sins, from their circumstances, from their situations. I don't think I could evangelize if I didn't think God could do this. If I thought you could lose your salvation, I don't know what I would tell people, "Here's eternal life. Don't lose it?" Really? "Here is salvation. Don't mess it up?" I couldn't say that. John Owen said, "A Saviour of men not saved is strange."

When the Golden Gate Bridge was being built in San Francisco, they didn't use any safety harnesses. And 23 men fell to their deaths, and the work almost came to a halt. But when the contractors put in a safety net, the work increased by 25% because the men felt safe. They knew if they fell, someone would catch them. That's what this passage said. This is what we offer people in Christ. If they fall, someone will catch them. If they mess up, they are eternally secure.

Eternal life is eternal, which means that if you have it, you can't lose it. It will always be there if you're in Christ. And it leads to a final thing God causes to work together for our good. He uses time and eternity. He uses our circumstances, ugly circumstances at times, tribulation, distress and sword; talks about being put to death all day long. Those are some ugly circumstances. He uses even things like that for our good. And that leads to a third and a final thing God causes to work together for our good and that is: everything.

As Paul closes the chapter here, he kind of lumps it all into one heading and he says, "In case I missed anything, God causes everything to work together for our good." The good, the bad and the ugly, the tough stuff in here in this passage, and He uses it all. And he says this in two long sentences at the end of the chapter starting in verse 37. He says, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul mentions the love of God twice in here because this is what it's about. This is what this passage is about. "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." And then in verse 39, "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God." It all goes back to the love of God. If God loves you, He loves you infinitely. If He forgives you, He forgives you infinitely. He never gets tired of it, which is why Paul says, "Neither angels, nor principalities can take it away." Some of your translations say "rulers" there. It means "eternal rulers, eternal supernatural rulers". "Nor things present, nor things to come," they can't do it either. "Nor powers, nor height, nor depth," everything fits under height and depth. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Why? Because nothing can stop God. It depends on Him and not you.

This is why (going back to what we said the beginning) we need to evangelize, because people need to hear this, amen? People need to know about a God like this. They need to know a love like this. I need to know a love like this. They're not going to get it anywhere else, so you have to tell them. You have to show them the love of God in Romans eight. You need to tell people that Jesus can save them and keep them saved.

I don't know if you've ever witnessed to someone, led him to the Lord. Many of you have had that opportunity, that blessing, but you know when someone comes to Christ, a switch does ... something does change in their life, but on the other hand, they continue to mess up and fail. When they do, you need to tell them God still loves them. God still forgives, if they're in Christ. You need to tell them God is calling sinners and causing all things to work together for their good.

A group of Muslim and Christian sailors were once on board a ship, when a man fell overboard. And he actually went into the water, literally, and as they watched him struggle, the Muslim said, "You know, if it's God's will to save him, God will save him. Leave him alone." And the Christian said, "You know what? We believe it's God's will to save him," and they threw him a life preserver. We need to be throwing people life preservers today. We need to be saying "It's God's will to save sinners," because it is. He loves to do that.

And I want to encourage you to do that this morning and reach out to the lost. This is a wonderful passage to do that and to remind us of our security that we have in Christ. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for the depths of a passage like this. On one hand, we do this sermon, and then I feel like you could do a whole series of a hundred sermons on this and never plumb the depths of it. Lord, we thank you for what You have done for us in Christ, and we thank you that the love You have is infinitely deep. We use the word "infinite" earlier because we never can get to the depth of this. As a matter of fact, we'll spend all of heaven and eternity pondering how much You love sinners like us.

Father, I do pray if there's any here this morning who don't know the love of God, that You would open their hearts to it today, that You would remind them of what they're missing in Christ and the eternal security, the eternal comfort, all the things we talked about today. They're missing it. and I pray You would draw them to the Saviour.

Lord, for those of us who do know this passage by heart, and we've experience to these things, we rejoice in it, Lord. And we pray that we would have compassion for those who don't know it. Lord, thank you for Your mercy. Thank you that You do call sinners to Yourself and You keep them there when they come. Now, as we close out our service, Lord, may You be honoured in this week as we seek to reach down and save the lost. We pray this, in Jesus' name, amen.