

## Guaranteed Glory

*Romans 8:28-39*

Hi everyone, my name is Drake Rider, I'm a pastoral intern here at Union Church, and the elders have given me the opportunity to preach to you all this morning, and I'm grateful for it. I hope I don't bore you today, but since I went to a WWI history museum this week, I'm just in that headspace and had to share an American war story.

I think a common human longing we all feel, as we look around at the atrocities of the world, we wonder: can anything good come from this? In challenging life circumstances, or just watching the nightly news we see all these flawed attempts at spinning something terrible into a "silver lining" or "glass half full." As humans, we long to see evil turned for good.

An example of this came after WWII. The U.S. government started a top secret program "Operation Paperclip" which brought former German Nazi rocket scientist Wernher Von Braun and his colleagues into NASA in an attempt to win the "space race."

The U.S. government thought it was the best way that they could guarantee our citizens safety. Because at the time, the greatest threat was no longer Germany, but quickly became the Russians, fearing nuclear weapons that might come from space.

The best case scenario for the government happened as Werner Von-Braun went on to successfully design the Saturn 5 rocket which sent the Apollo missions to the Moon, and was recognized as an American hero winning tons of awards.

I don't know about you, but I cringe inside at that story. Was that really turning evil for good? Brushing Nazi government officials' crimes under the rug, to lead our nation's defense efforts in the next war? What a flawed attempt at justice! It's in our DNA to long for turnarounds and comeback stories, but these human attempts on earth to right-our-wrongs are such a let down.

But what if I told you, our God, Yahweh, has a better method? That he can actually turn terrible situations for good? Not in the questionable morality of the world, but in perfect morality of a holy God who upholds eternal justice. We long for an all powerful ruler who can right every wrong, wipe every tear, and lift up the lowly.

This morning we're going to look at a passage that defies the logic of our day. We have scripture that will satisfy our cries for justice, scripture that promises the lowly an eternal victory.

My main point this morning is this: **All things work for good for those God calls into the inseparable love of Christ.**

To get into this concept of “*All things work for good for those God calls into the inseparable love of Christ*”- let’s ask the Spirit for help:

[Take my lips and speak through them . . . ]

**First**, I’m hoping we can look at this concept: “All things for good in glory.” Paul’s first idea is “all things are for good in glory.” Let’s read starting in 28: [READ v28] “*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*”

“And we KNOW” . . . Union church, if God’s word tells us we can KNOW something, there is no doubt. Let’s look at that claim: “*We KNOW . . . for those who love God, all things work together for good.*” Wait a second, did we read that right? ALL things work for good? Is that your life experience, ALL things in your life work for good?

If we only had this verse, because it’s in the Bible we can have full confidence everything will work for our good without any explanation. But how kind is God that he doesn’t leave us there? After making such a big claim, the Lord was kind enough to break it down for us. To reveal his playbook, give us a peek behind the curtain.

You see, Verse 28 is like one of those massive 100ft tall American flags you can see from the highway, displaying the bright bold red white, and blue shining under the lights. You seen those before? This statement “all things work for good” is kind of like that - a beautiful claim flying in the wind - this claim that for every Christian “everything is gonna work out in the end.”

If verse 28 is the flag, then that means what follows - verses 29-30 - are the 30ft hole in the ground that keeps the flag pole standing. If you’re going to make a claim like verse 28 makes, you are going to need to dig up alot of earth to successfully ground such a large claim.

This foundational hole Paul digs is sometimes referred to as the “golden chain” or the “Ordo Salutis” - the order of salvation. It starts in verse 29 [READ v29 - 30 “*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified*” ]

Foreknown. Predestined. Called. Justified. Glorified. This is a list of really churchy words. At Union, we don’t want to be the type of people who simply talk like parrots - just repeating Bible words without having a clue of their meaning.

If we had to put it in modern English that's easier to understand, I'd describe it like this: we're made to become more and more like Jesus. God knew ahead of time, and predetermined who his people would be.

As a side note: just so you're aware, this is not a popular idea: an all-knowing, all-powerful God, who predetermines things. But Union church family, this is why we preach through the whole Bible, from one passage to the next. We let the Bible speak to what it wants to teach each Sunday. We don't logically reason what our God is like, but instead we read the each verse and try to unpack God's word in all its beauty. So if you have difficulty with this concept of a God who predestines, press into the text, don't run away.

This is confusing, a lot here - we're going to get into this more next week, as Pastor Kyle will dive deeper into this concept. But this is what I want you to hear: Romans 8 tells us God knew ahead of time, and predetermined his children.

Okay, back to **digging our flag's foundation**: Paul has already said we're KNOWN, PREDESTINED, and CALLED - which just means God draws us to himself. A gathers his people, summoning us to new life.

Let's keep digging: *"those who he called, he justified."* This means "not guilty." Everyone who is called to faith, is pronounced NOT guilty before the judge - the text doesn't just say "of the called, SOME are justified" but "those who he called, HE justified." That means every single one.

*[Step to the side of the pulpit]* I just want to pause before I get to the finale of our golden chain. Just real quick: have you noticed these are all verbs, each one an action word. But did you notice who is doing every single one of these actions? Did man call? Did man justify himself? Predestine himself? No, God did.

This is good news, friends. I don't know if you've seen the depth of the ugliness of your own heart, but based on what God has shown me of mine, I am so glad it's not up to me to complete the golden chain over the course of my life.

Let this be good news to your ears. God is effective in every action he takes. Take comfort in an all-knowing, all-powerful God saving his children without mistake. There is no slip-up in the process, God doesn't whiff. He bats a thousand.

So finally, the last part of this "golden chain" is the reason why "all things work for good." It's the bottom of our flag's foundation. Paul has dug deep to show us we can have confidence in the Lord's plan! God's children are [HOLD UP FINGERS] 1: known, 2: predetermined, 3: called, 4: not guilty, SO THAT - Step 5: we would be GLORIFIED.

That's the end goal! That's the good news! Paul's not talking here about on earth getting a glorified seat at the table of honor. He's not talking about fame on earth - not that kind of glory. It's so much better than that. This is God completing the work the holy spirit has started in transforming you. It starts spiritually now, but also this glory is PHYSICAL and FOR LATER in heaven! Like it says in Philippians 3: *"Jesus will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body."*

Anybody wake up with some aches or pains this morning? Too tired to get out of bed? Did anybody wake up anxious, depressed, weighed down with deep sorrow? In this broken creation - here and now - pain is real. We long to not be broken anymore, to be done with this weak, deteriorating flesh.

In comparison - let's now close our eyes and try to picture waking up in the new heavenly earth as perfect as Eden, after a perfect night's sleep - in a new glorified body, leaping up to joyfully take on the day without bad knees, or a sore back. No more migraines, no more stomach aches - never again will you experience pain, or sickness or loss. No more worry, no more anxiety. You will forever be in perfect peace.

This is the glorified state our passage promises! Every bit of suffering you go through now will be overcome. **The journey you're on, today - with every ounce of pain - is going to be worth the destination of your glorified body in the new heavenly earth.** Everything works for our ULTIMATE good, because one day we'll be glorified.

That's why we can have confidence when Paul says "all things will work for good." This promise - a flag boldly flying in the wind - is founded in the depths of a golden chain. Our God has started his work, and guarantees it'll end in total body & soul transformation - we will one day be glorified into the beaming image of Jesus.

On that foundation, our flag stands. Have confidence in God's ability to turn ALL things in your life for future good! He can do it. Take comfort in a Father who is mighty to save. God's love turns all things for good in glory.

**Second**, I want to talk about Son-Sacrificing Love. Everything Paul just described is motivated by LOVE. A love strong enough to sacrifice children. That's the second point: **all things work for good because of the Father's son-sacrificing love.**

So, *what are we going to say to these things?* That's the next question Paul asks at least. If you haven't picked up this trend yet in our Romans series: Paul likes to ask himself questions. It might seem kind of odd, but this is a common rhetorical device in his day that helps us out quite a bit.

You see, by dropping in questions, Paul can address curiosity that the reader might be feeling, opposing objections, or in this case: he speaks to our heart: *“What then shall we say to these things?”* Don’t you feel the awe and wonder in Paul’s voice?

Because in 8 chapters of writing - from the introduction in chapter one, until now - Paul has built his argument: he demonstrated that God is noticed by every human in creation, and every one of them disobeyed. Jesus entered creation as the only perfect man, the fulfillment of God’s promise, now even Gentiles like you & I can be offspring of Abraham! In Jesus we have assurance in the defeat of all sin. God has done what we could never do! Now sinners can inherit all things with Jesus! Everything works for our eternal good! Look what God has accomplished for his people!

So . . . Union church . . . what are we going to say to these things?! The average Joe translation might sound like this: *“Can you believe how crazy this is?! Can you believe it!”* Paul is speechless!

He adds to his amazement in the next part of verse 31: *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Basically he’s saying: *“No one can stand against us!”* As one pastor said: *“One person with God on his side is in the majority!”* No enemy stands a chance.

Verse 32: *“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* There it is, our second point: the Father’s deep, son-sacrificing love.

Because if the Father allowed the death of his son, what gift would he refuse? Logically speaking, what gift is more profound than sacrificing your child? This would have immediately brought to the Jewish mind the image of Abraham taking his son Isaac to the top of the mountain.

In obedience, Abraham laid the firewood for the altar, and tied down Isaac, his only son. Remember how hard it was for Sarah and Abraham to conceive?? They waited 25 YEARS for God’s promise of bearing a child. Sarah was 90 years old! Yet, somehow Abraham is willing to tie down his miracle baby, the child of the promise, his only son Isaac, and took out the knife to slaughter him.

Do you feel that? How obscene this is? Who could ever put a knife to their own kid? . . . . . God did. God the Father, for the church, plunged the knife into the chest of his boy. A God who doesn’t spare his son, what more do you need to demonstrate how deeply he’s committed to you?

There is nothing too costly that the Father won’t give us. Like a loving parent, God gives his everything. He says, *“What’s mine, is yours. Every gift I have is yours!”* That’s son-sacrificing love.

Ponder that today. (How far your God has gone to bring you into the family). Take a quiet moment to praise him. Maybe just as your head hits the pillow tonight, tell him: *Father, thank you. You chose to kill your son, for me.*

With the cost of Jesus' blood in mind, let's enter the courtroom. You need to know what you're up against. As one theologian said, *"The principal work of Satan in the life of the believer is NOT temptation . . . his chief work is accusation."*

Paul takes us up to the heavenly courtroom, so picture the final judgment as you stand before God. We've got the prosecuting attorney, the devil to our right, and Paul the defense lawyer to our left. God on the bench, gavel in hand.

Union church, I want you to take a moment and think of your mistakes that the devil keeps wielding against you. An area of guilt in your life. An addiction you can't break OR the shameful way you waste your time - your failure to handle responsibility - your shortcomings as a parent - your flaws as a spouse. Where is the devil pressing charges?

Paul steps up to the stand in verse 33: [READ 33-34] *"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died - more than that, who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."*

So how does Paul address the devil's accusations against you? He mocks them! Paul points out a truth that you NEED to get in your bones. If you're going to run this race of the Christian life, you have to understand this: **it's just as meaningless to lay accusation against the believer as it is to accuse Jesus.** You, child of God, are clothed in Christ's righteousness. The Father covered Jesus in your sin, so that you would be covered in righteousness (1 Cor 5).

Jesus took your punishment: For every wrong, every act of disobedience. Now that your slate is clean, who is going to charge you? God says you're justified.

So what if the devil tries to condemn you? Jesus died as the spotless lamb for that. As if that's not enough, he came alive and now he sits in heaven advocating on your behalf that you are his spotless bride, who he purchased at Calvary.

So what is our verdict, when the devil charges God's elect? . . . NOT . . . guilty. Through one ultimate, radical payment of son-sacrificing love. This is the power of the inseparable love of Christ. Remember: **All things work for good for those God calls into the inseparable love of Christ.**

**Third** and finally: God's love conquers all. Our final four verses communicate one last beautiful truth about God's love: it conquers all.

At this point, Paul takes us out of the courtroom and he's just gonna appeal to us in a more relational way. It's the same main point: Paul is explaining the profound way the church is loved in Christ, but now he's coming from a different angle. Let's pick up in verse 35 [READ v35-36] *[Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered"]*

This time the line of questioning gets heavy: *“Who will separate us from the love of Christ?”* Paul isn’t asking who will separate us from the *“FEELING of being loved.”* Can I just say this: being a Christian does NOT mean that you will always FEEL loved by God. Our feelings do not dictate truth. We’re talking about an inseparable love that is in action, a victorious love that is accomplished. That no matter how you feel in the moment, Christian, God has loved you in the most profound way possible through the son.

This verse even suggests that hardship is part of the Christian life. Let’s run through a summary of the potential threats - to God’s love - that Paul lists: trials, pain, persecution . . . hunger, exposure, danger . . . and death.

Here’s the crazy thing: this list didn’t just get pulled out of thin air. Paul is listing his life experience here! Remember Paul pouring out his struggles to the Corinthians? In that letter he dumps his whole resume: beatings, time in prison, lashings, shipwrecks, starvation, exposure, and daily anxiety for the churches he planted.

This isn’t theoretical! He’s speaking from experience! This is why it’s so surprising how often Christians say - and I don’t want to mock this - we’ve all heard the genuine believer who says: *“I just don’t understand why God would allow \_\_\_\_\_ to happen in my life.”* Or *“I just can’t believe in a God who would ever let \_\_\_\_\_ happen to my family.”* It implies that if you follow Jesus, God will prevent suffering in your life.

Did you not hear about the apostles? How John was banished to a remote island, and the other 12 were all executed for their faith. The early church suffered: Peter was hung upside down, James beheaded, Thomas by the spear, Matthew by the sword, Jude shot with arrows, Mark was dragged by horses through the streets until death.

Paul saw Christians all around him being publically killed for their faith, and in our passage, he looks that in the eye, and says: is that it? Is death or suffering the best you can do? You think that’s going to separate us from Christ?

He quotes from the 44th Psalm: *“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

That’s the Christian life. We are agreeing to a life that includes difficulty and even suffering. You might have it easier than the early church, but no matter what hardship comes, Union church . . . we should not be surprised.

Can these things separate us from the love of God? Paul finally answers his line of questioning in the next verse: no. NO! Can we be separated from God’s love? The answer is no. If this doesn’t bring a spark of joy in your heart today, I don’t know what will. Can the worst things that the world throws at us in this life get in the way of our God? The answer is a deafening no.

*“In all these things we are MORE than conquerors through him who loved us.”*

That word can be translated as “hyper-conquerors” because this is not a battle we win by the skin of our teeth. It’s not a photo finish where we have to go back and see the replay to determine who won. It is a victory by complete domination. Our Lord punks Satan in such dramatic fashion, that the devil wishes he could hide in the locker room, and exit the stadium at halftime.

But God didn’t want to win alone. Jesus drafted us onto his team - the team of conquerors - and we get to share in his victory. Through his atoning death, burial, and then coming back to life, through the resurrection, he won. And now, Paul tells us by association: you win.

*“For I am SURE that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Nothing can separate - it’s all getting defeated. That last rhetorical question . . . Paul gave the most assured denial. Paul is sure. He cries out in the loudest, most triumphant voice. He is absolutely, positively sure: nothing can separate.

Think of it like this . . . I want to leave you with this . . . I heard this word picture from another pastor and it’s stuck - like really stuck with me. It’s what I think of every time I read Romans 8 now. **Has anybody seen whitewater rapids?** Not the river off the millpond in town, I’m talking a river where the waves are crashing on the rocks, water is being thrown into the air - the powerful flow takes everything with it, rushing downstream.

Well, these obstacles: death, rulers, suffering, demonic powers . . . ALL of it . . . those are like TWIGS that get swept up into the raging river of God’s love. **All evils are not just STOPPED but REDIRECTED - caught up in the river, RUSHING downstream for ultimate good.**

That’s the promise we started with this morning: all things work for our good in the end.

So what are you facing today? What obstacle stands between you and God? It is real, life is painful. In seasons of suffering - which you might in right now - deep sorrow and lament should not be dismissed. But if you could for just a moment, zoom out from your current situation. Look down on it from a bird’s eye view. Can that separate you from Jesus? . . . . . Paul says no. . . . . God’s word says no.



Union church, welcome to the team of conquerors. We are on the universe's most dominant team ever assembled. You didn't contribute to the victory, but you get to share in the spoils.

In your new, pain-free, perfectly functioning, peace filled, glorified body, you'll get to put the championship ring on your finger, sit atop the float in the victory parade. The feast is prepared, that's what heaven is: a wedding feast. You get the triumphant welcome home from your heavenly Father who's running toward you in celebration. I don't know about you, but I can't wait to celebrate that victory in heaven one day. Let's bow our heads and pray.

*Father, you have done it all - thank you. You chose to kill your son, for us. You give purpose to our suffering, promising it will all be turned for good in the end. Jesus, thank you for being the sacrifice. You conquered, and now we cannot be separated from you. We praise you right now! And by the Spirit we will continue to praise you when we walk out these doors! We will praise you in our cars! We will praise you over lunch and as our heads hit the pillow tonight! You get the glory today. We love you Lord. Amen.*