

Date : 3 November 2024
Theme : Making our salvation sure
Topic : More than conquerors in Christ Jesus
Passage : Romans 8:28-37
Key verse : *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28*

Introduction

Our key verse today, *Romans 8:28* above, is often quoted, used, misused and used out of context. (For example, it is insensitive to tell a non-Christian father, whose son had just died of a freak accident, that his son's tragic death was ...*for good*. Such a thoughtless and feeble attempt at comfort would be totally inappropriate).

Romans 8:28 is a statement of fact for Christ-followers. Like a blank cheque, it is the ultimate security for every Christian. What is often overlooked are the parameters, and to whom this promise applies. We want to examine why and how it looks?

Who qualifies for this verse?

i) Those who love God *Romans 8:28*

- Love God is not believe God. Love for God is best tested in adversity. Many have believed but when trials and testings come, they give up.
- Love God is not just feeling. It is the heart set on pleasing God borne out of gratitude to Him. The context in *Romans* of those who love God (have gained access to God by faith through grace)...
 - Rejoice in the certainty (hope) of sharing in the glory of God. This hope fills our heart with joy because Jesus died and resurrected. Sharing the glory of God is our eternal anticipation. *Romans 5:2*
 - Rejoice in sufferings *Romans 5:3*.
 - Rejoice in God who reconciled us to Him through our Lord Jesus *Romans 5:9-11*. (He saved us from God's wrath when we were God's enemies).

ii) Have been called *Romans 8:28*

- Those who are called have heard the call to faith (to the life in Christ) through the preaching of the gospel. When they gladly received the invitation to believe in Jesus, they received the authority to become sons of God.
- The new birth results in new appetites for righteous living
 - New desire to do good *Romans 7:21*
 - New delight in God's law *Romans 7:22*
 - New Master (allegiance to God) *Romans 7:25*

iii) According to God's purpose

What was God's purpose for us when He sent Jesus to earth?

- To be holy
Romans 8:3, 4 tell us that Christ's incarnation (coming as Man), His death and resurrection was for this purpose: that we might live a holy life. The purpose of Jesus' entire life is to make us holy. (Whenever we sin, we frustrate the aim and purpose of Jesus' entire life, death and ministry).
- To conform to the likeness of Jesus.
God works in and through our circumstances so that we bear the family likeness of suffering. ...*we share in His sufferings Romans 8:17*

- To make God's purpose our purpose. (our calling is more than our career or family). God plans for His church to participate in His restoring work in the world.

Therefore, we need to see that not all things work together for good for every one. Two things need to be true for this promise to apply:

- You love God
- You are called according to His purpose.

If a person attends church, but does not love God and does not see himself as representing God in this world by holy living and partnering with the Lord in His saving purpose, he cannot claim this promise. The opposite of *...God works for good...* is *...storing up wrath for yourself...* Romans 2:5

1. What and why *...in all things...*

a) What does it mean...in all things?

- The focus is not on isolated events in the believer's life but on the sum total of all events (not each thing by itself is good but all things work together for good).

(Example: If I lose my job or my baby dies, I do not say this is good. Rather, God will use this event and weave it together with other facets of my life to produce what He knows to be the very best for me.

(OR The individual ingredients that go into a cake, like flour, baking soda, taste terrible and bland by themselves, but when mixed in the right amount and cooked, a metamorphosis takes place and the cake comes out delicious. To judge the whole cake on the basis of the individual ingredients would be a great mistake).

b) Why *...in all things...*?

- **God is Sovereign** when the individual trials and tragedies of our lives are neither desirable or sweet, (very often they are bitter and painful). In *Genesis*, He sends the flood and sends Joseph ahead into Egypt to preserve His people. God sovereignly writes the story of man and moves it forward.
- He is the **Master Controller**. While He does not expect us to see such individual event as good, He does expect us to trust His sovereignty at work as He conducts everything in concert for our good.
- He is **Initiator, Originator, the first Enjoyer of all**.
 - He appreciates His creation...*good...and...very good*. We get the sense that He was really enjoying them. All things are from Him and for Him.
 - He is persistent in His project of blessing man and to work with mankind despite the rebellion of Adam and Eve. He calls Abram to serve as a conduit of divine blessing for all families of the earth.

c) Our problem with God-centeredness

On a more everyday level, we place ourselves at the center of our narratives. We may be angry or sad that God has not intervened more frequently. We have flipped the script: God inhabits our stories, rather than the other way round.

2. What is God actively doing on our behalf?

- a) God foreknew = This is past tense. Long before God created the earth, He knew in advance what will happen. He does not override human choice.
- b) Predestined = God planned a glorious destiny.

Here He sets the outcome. He planned the ultimate results and pre-destined us to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. It is not only about attaining to heaven.

- In *Romans 8:29* what He determined or predestined is not about our salvation but how we may conform to the image of Christ. He planned ahead for us to be like His Son, full of grace and truth. How do we identify whether we are Christlike? By our attitudes – namely humility, purity, righteousness, peaceable, meekness. (the Beatitudes in *Matthew*).
- He calls us into fellowship with the Father and the Son through the gospel. This calling is the invitation to respond to Him.

(The series by which God plans to conform us to the image of His Son – He foreknew, predestined, called, saved, justified and glorified us *Romans 8:29 -30*). Note these words are in the past tense, specially the word glorified.

(These words are in the past tense because our destiny as God sees it has already taken place. By letting us know the end at the beginning we know ahead of time that we are winners. This should spur us on in our service for Him).

3. The Blessings of conforming to the likeness of Christ.

- a) We are heirs and co-heirs with Christ. *Romans 8:17-25*

God offers us a chance to share in the incomparable glory that will be revealed in us as we walk according to His purpose. There would be sufferings for Jesus but such sufferings would be momentary and considered as light afflictions. The weight of His glory is so great compared to these light afflictions.

(Perhaps we realise we are more loving / helpful than we used to be or we react in a more Spirit-controlled, godly way. At such times, we need to remind ourselves that the pain of conforming to Christ, in a world of frustration and skepticism, cannot be compared to the glory awaiting us; our future glory, compared to our present pain).

- b) We are more than conquerors through Christ *Romans 8:31-37*

What are these conquests? "*All these things*" = *tribulations, distress, persecution, famine...* To be a conqueror we need to fight the battles. To be *more than conquerors* means we not only vanquish the foe but also take his plunder. Reinhard Bonke's battle cry is "Plunder Hell to Populate Heaven".

Nothing can separate us from the love of God *Romans 8:39*. We are secured for time and eternity. The Lord guarantees our security. He has promised never to leave nor forsake us.

- c) All these are possible because of the role of the indwelling Holy Spirit in us *Romans 8:1-17*

- Enables us to set our minds on spiritual things *Romans 8:1-8*
 - To receive life and peace
 - Submit to God
 - Please God
- Confirms we belong to the Lord Jesus *Romans 8:9*
- Imparts life and righteousness *Romans 8:11, 13*

- Adopts us as sons of God *Romans 8:15-17*
 - Testifies that we are children of God
 - Heirs of God
 - Joint heirs with Christ
- Helps us in every weakness, and in prayer *Romans 8:26,27*

Application

God determines the destiny of all Christ-followers to conform to the image of His Son.
 What can we look forward to?

① Destiny 1

Our glorification as joint heirs (elevation from being slaves; past tense is used)
 God sees the end from the beginning.

- When we suffer with Him, the glory will be out of proportion to the suffering.
 Actually our suffering is not worthy of the glory.

When facing happy or hard times, I will retain faith even when things go bad.

② Destiny 2

He causes all things to work together for good.

I want to trust God in this difficult matter / person by not fretting because He is in charge.

③ Destiny 3 *Romans 8:29*

To conform us to the image of Christ

- He called us

I now know why I am called to salvation – to.....

- Justified us

I am justified (= declared not guilty) to.....

- Glorified us

I look at my present pain in the light of my future glory.

④ Destiny 4 *Romans 8: 35, 39*

Enjoy God's love

- eternally
- graciously
- all things

I will thank God for every good thing this past week.....

⑤ Destiny 5 *Romans 8:37*

Make us more than conquerors in all things.

I am more than a conqueror in