

Series: God Saves #1310

Title: Romans 8.28

*God Love: A Very Unique Thing*

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. I hope you have been with us all this week. We are drilling down on the twenty-eighth verse of Romans chapter 8. Romans 8.28 is famous among those of us who love God, because this verse contains the fulfilment of a God promise we like, even though we do not fully understand it. The text 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.”**

At the start I want to take us back to something I said on Wednesday of this week. I said I would connect together three parts to this one verse. Here are those parts. It is “we” with “those who love God” with “who are called.” Those are the three parts I am connecting together. I will give these to you again. “We” with “those who love God” with “who are called.” When you get a chance you can highlight these and draw a line or arrow connecting these together in your Bible. Highlight “we” and “those who love God” and “who are called.”

I said I put these together for a practical reason, so you can *clearly see* for whom God causes all things to work together for good. That is not everybody. God only causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and who are called. We talked about that yesterday. I am also putting these together for a theological or biblical reason. This emphasis on “those who love God, who are called” is essential to understanding who God is and how He relates to those who love Him. It is this second reason I want to pick up on now and carry into next week (Lord willing).

And what I want to say off the top is this: I believe the key to understanding and properly applying Romans 8, verse 28 to our lives is to truly understand that love as related to God is a very unique thing. I am even willing to say a strange thing. There is nothing like God’s love for us *and* our love for God. I am aware how the Bible stresses that a vibrant love *for* God translates into an active love *for* other people. That as we love God in a vertical relationship that love then expands in our horizontal relationships with one another. I get that. But still there is this distinctive nature to *God love*.

And I find that I am continually on a quest to comprehend what this is and how it functions in my own life. Let me see if I can flesh this out for you, a testimony if you will. I will be personal. What I want to receive in my life is God’s love. What I want to give in my life is love to God. I have a desire to receive and I have a desire to give. The object in both directions is *God*. That sounds simple, but in reality that is complex. I think, here is why, or part of the reason why. God loves me in a way that is (almost) incomprehensible to me. And I love Him in a way that is inadequate to me. That is, I have a difficult time understanding (making intelligible) His love for me. And I have a difficult time expressing my love for Him *in the way in which He receives love*. The difficulty in both directions is with *me*, not with *God*.

So, for example, I come to a verse like Romans 8.28 and I tremble before it. “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.” I question, how do I know I love God? And how is it that God is causing all things in my life to work together for my good, assuming I love Him? It feels like there is a lot here riding on loving God (and on God loving me). Do you see what I mean?

In fact, there is something intriguing here in the Apostle Paul’s language. Sticking with our good friend, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, he picks up on this in his writing, quote, “Why does Paul describe Christian people in these terms? Why does he not say, ‘All things work together for good to them who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ’? That is equally true of Christians. Why does he choose in particular to describe them firstly as people who ‘love God’ [183-184]?” Unquote. That is indeed a good question. And the answer is instructive, very convicting, and helpful, at least for me. See how this suits you.

The real test in my relationship with God is not really do I believe in Him. The real test is do I *love* Him? The real test is not do I give intellectual agreement to the being of God. Do I accept the true doctrines and say, in my mind, that’s true. The real test is do I love Him with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind and with all my strength? Love is the test.

Lloyd-Jones continues, “The Apostle is concerned to show that the Christian goes beyond simply believing in God. James in the second chapter of his epistle tells us that ‘The devils also believe, and tremble.’ So it not sufficient simply to ask a man whether he believes in God. You can believe in God and still not be a Christian, and so this great promise [of Romans 8, verse 28] is not true of you. Something further is required. It is not just a matter of giving intellectual assent to the truth about God...A more thorough and searching test is needed. It is one thing to be religious, it is quite another to be a Christian. It may sound well to say, ‘I have always believed in God’ but that belief may be of no value whatsoever; it is not of necessity Christian belief. A man can be a theist without being a Christian. So the test needs to be more thorough [184-185].” End of quote.

The point is Paul says, “those who love God.” Love is the test. Jesus said as much in Matthew chapter 22, verse 37. I am reading Matthew 22, verses 35-37, **“One of them, a lawyer, asked [Jesus] a question, testing Him, <sup>36</sup>‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ <sup>37</sup> And [Jesus] said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’** Please notice the word “love.” God desires to be loved. God wants us to love Him. God commands that we love Him. So, back in Romans 8.28, Paul writes, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...”

Loving God truly matters to God. This is why I say the key to understanding and properly applying Romans 8, verse 28 to our lives is to truly understand that love as related to God is a very unique thing. I am even willing to say a strange thing, a peculiar thing. There is nothing like God’s love for us *and* our love for God. There is this distinctive nature to *God love*. And I, for one, want to be certain that I am loving God and I know that I am loving God, and that He is loving me.

So then, it is valuable if we know at least two things. First, why do we love God? Second, how do we love God such that He will receive our love? We will be answering these questions next week. And here is where I will share more about this complexity in my own relationship with the Living God. God loving me in a way that is (almost) incomprehensible to me. And I loving God in a way that is inadequate to me.

What I am calling God love is unique and understanding this is a key to understanding Romans 8, verse 28, and especially when we get to God causing all things to work together for good specifically to those who love God, to those who are called.

Alright, this sets us up nicely for next week (Lord willing). I hope you will be with us then. And do bring your own relationship with God to bear on this verse and our discussion of it. Let me pray for us. God, our Father who is in heaven, thank You for loving us. We want to love You. And so we pray that You will teach us how to love You. Loving You, it strikes me, is a unique practice in my life. Being loved by You is a love unlike any other kind of love I receive. Teach me, teach us, to make some sense of this. Help us to know that we are loving You so that we can receive the blessing of this promise, that You cause all things to work together for our good, to those of us who genuinely love You.

Loving You is the test. Your servant Paul, inspired by You, wrote, ‘to those who love God.’ May these, my friends, and I love You this day and love You this weekend. In the Name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen. Join us on Monday because God Is.

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