

Series: God Saves #1313

Title: Romans 8.28
Loving God

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. We set out on Monday of this week to answer two significant questions related to what we have read in Romans 8, verse 28. In English, from the New American Standard Bible (the NASB), this verse reads, **“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.”**

But listen to how this begins in the Greek language, “And we know that to the ones loving God all things work together for good.” As we have said, the ones loving God comes first. The people who know that God causes all things to work together for good are the people who love God, who are called according to His purpose. And this raises two questions. First, *why* do we love God? Second, *how* do we love God? And specifically, how do we love God in the way He wants to be loved?

To the question *why* do we love God, the Bible answers: we love God because we have been called by God to love God. For the past two days we have discussed our calling. God wants our love, and so He takes action in our lives to interrupt our love for sin and self and to transform us in such a way that He will be the supreme love of our lives. As Romans 8, verse 28 says, “To those who love God, to those who are called...” Love and calling, calling and love are forever interlinked with one another. Indeed, we cannot love God until God gives us the particular, the effectual, the internal call. Once we answer that call, then we begin our love of God. It is the act of God in our lives that moves us from hating Him to loving Him.

And it is remarkable that even though we hate God, God loves us! And He moves us into a love relationship with Himself. It is difficult for me to even put this into words.

I submit to you that if you are a person who loves God, then you already know this at the level of personal experience. You know that in your natural self you did not love God. It was only when God interrupted your life with His call that you heard Him calling and answered Him positively. You loved your sin. You were perfectly happy living your life opposed to God. You were hostile to Him and that did not bother you one bit. *But then*, the Lord broke into your life and He totally changed your mind and your heart and – miraculously – you now love Him. You hate your sin. It disgusts you. You are eager to shed this mortal flesh and to go to heaven so you can worship the Lord forever *without* sin!

You already know that if it were not for God, there is no way you would love God. It took Him first loving you for you to love Him. 1 John chapter 4, verse 19 says, **“We love, because He first loved us.”** 1 John 4, verse 19, “We love, because He first loved us.” It takes God to love us before we can ever love Him.

Before we move on to answer our second question, I remind you once more: we love God because we have been called by God to love God. Romans 8.28 says, “To those who love God, to those who are called...” And this word called will appear again down in verse 30 so I will say something more about it there. Let’s leave it now and ask: *how* do we love God?

I will tell you up front that we are going to dedicate some time to answering this question, because it is important in solidifying our understanding *and application* of this twenty-eighth verse of Romans 8. We do not just want intellectual comprehension of this verse. We also want to live it in our personal lives. We desire to be a people who love God. How do we that? Well, let me make a statement. I will support this with Scripture, but get this posted front and center on your brain. Are you ready? Here it is:

We please God by faith. We love God by obedience. Again: we please God by faith. We love God by obedience. Do you like it? Some of you do, some of you definitely do not, and others of you want me to tell you more before you can assess how this strikes you. We please God by faith.

Here is the Scripture: Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 6, **“Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”** (Hebrews 11, verse 6.) We are going to be talking about faith when we get into verses 29 and 30 of

Romans 8 but we must know this: our faith pleases God. Do you want to please God? If so, live by faith *in* Him! We please God by faith.

Likewise, we love God by obedience. Here, let me walk us through some Scripture in both the Hebrew Bible (what we call our Old Testament) and in the New Testament. We will begin with God the Father and move to God the Son. In Exodus, just the second Book of the Bible, and chapter 20 God gives His servant Moses the Ten Commandments. With great interest we read this in verses 4-6.

I am reading Exodus chapter 20, verses 4-6, **“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”** Note what the Lord says he will do to those who hate Him by worshiping and serving idols. *And note* what God will do to those who *love* Him *by* keeping His commandments.

Exodus chapter 20, verse 6: God will show lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. As He speaks out the Ten Commandments to Moses, God tells us directly how to love Him: we love Him by keeping His commandments, that is by doing what each of these commandments require of us. Loving God and keeping God’s commandments go together. Specifically, in this context, those who love God do not make for themselves idols and do not worship and serve idols. Which is very convicting *today* in our lives. What idols do you have? What idols do I have? If we really want to love God, we must smash these idols to death. Let’s search our minds and hearts and homes and offices and schools and churches and identify idols. Then, let’s get rid of them! That is part of our obedience to the Lord. Let’s not make Him jealous.

That was Exodus 20 and now turn the page or scroll down to Deuteronomy chapter 7. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and chapter 7. I will begin reading in verse 7. (Deuteronomy 7.7) In this chapter the Israelites are told how they are to relate to the Canaanites in the land, and listen to what God says to them in verses 7-11. This is Deuteronomy 7, verses 7-11.

“The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ¹⁰ but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, [God] will repay him to his face. ¹¹ Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.”

We will talk about these verses tomorrow, but notice again the connection between loving God and keeping His commandments. We love God by obedience. Join us tomorrow because God Is!

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