

God is Unstoppable

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[0 : 00] Now, the goal of this sermon is to convince you that if you love God, then God Almighty is making all your sin and all your suffering serve your ultimate good and that nothing can stop him.

That's the goal. And I'm going to give you, you know, every good sermon has application points. I'm going to give you the application points right now and get those out of the way. And then we'll get through the rest of the sermon. So there's really two application points. I want you to ask yourself, is this a God I could love?

And then to take all your sorrow and your sin to him at the cross. That's it. That's the application. Is this a God I can love? And then just take your sins to him. Take the sorrows to him.

God put Romans 8, 28 to 30 in the Bible to comfort broken people like us with his might, with his power and to make our lives just hum with significance.

So now that we've got that out of the way, we're going to jump right into the text. There's three verses, 28, 29 and 30. So there's three points. One, God makes evil serve good. Two, your good is glorious. And three, nothing can stop him.

[1 : 21] So verse 28 again, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose.

All things work together for good. Here's why that's so hard to believe. Because we want to put our finger on one bad in our life and trace it to one good in our life.

We want to look back on, you know, the sorrows of last year and say, ah, now I see why God allowed that to happen. And it was worth it. But if you've gone through deep sorrow or if you've seriously sinned, you know that's not generally the way that life works or that God works.

Paul says all things plural work together for good singular. Okay, so it's like trying to trace one bad to one good is like trying to understand why Beethoven's ninth symphony is a masterpiece by just listening to the notes of the French horn.

And you single out that one instrument and you listen to it and he plays a note here and a couple notes there and you think, I don't get it. I don't see it. It doesn't seem like a masterpiece to me. It's when all the instruments work together that we can hear the masterpiece.

[2 : 44] And it's when all things in life, all the things work together that God is building that masterpiece of your good.

So God has a purpose for you. It's a good purpose and it's not something vague. It's not something foggy, but it's an ultimate good that is concrete and glorious.

And the means that God uses to get you to that good is by bending all things in your life to serve that purpose.

All things work together for good. There is a lot of room in the word all. I mean, what part of our experience in this life doesn't fit somewhere in that word all.

It's a big word. So your mistakes, my mistakes, you know, if you feel that you've bitten off more than you can chew in life, you've gone down the wrong career path and you, you know, maybe you feel like you're, you're an imposter.

[3 : 50] Maybe you've made a foolish decision with money and it's hard to make ends meet. You've made mistakes. All things, all things work together for good.

Proverbs 3-6 says that if we, you know, consider God in our way in our life that he doesn't say that he puts us on a straight path. He says God will make straight your path. That crooked path you're on because of all the mistakes that we've made.

God straightens it in front of us. One of my favorites from Isaiah 35 verse eight, he says he's talking about the really Isaiah is talking about the Christian life and he's picturing it like a highway, like a road.

He says a highway will be there and it will be called the way of holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way, even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. Some of us hear that is good news. The Christian life is a road of holiness that you have to be clean and holy to walk, but even, even some of us fools can't stumble off that road.

[4 : 55] All things work together for good, including your mistakes. And it includes your suffering. Every time you experience the brokenness of the world in your body, in your mind, in your circumstances.

If you've gone through the death of a loved one. If you know the languishing and anxiety of isolation of this past 18 months. Sickness, disability, all of those kinds of suffering, any kind of suffering. Romans 8.18, so earlier in this chapter, Paul says that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.

All things work together for good, including your suffering and the good that God has for you far outweighs the suffering. Even the most horrible thing that's happened to you.

I wonder if you believe that. And sin, your sin is included in that word all. Do you ever think of that? All things work together for good, right?

[6 : 09] So I might think, well, what if I've done something really bad? Now, some of us have kind of this general sense of sinfulness. You know, I know I'm not the person I should be. I know I'm a sinful person, but some of us, maybe more of us, have that one or two huge glaring sins in our life.

That one thing that you're most ashamed of. That one thing that makes you feel dirty or unworthy or unlovable.

All those things are included too, in that word all. The very place in your heart where you feel the most powerless over your sin is the very place that God wants to touch with cleansing mighty power and bend it for your good.

Now, there's two mistakes that verse 28 helps us to avoid. Here's the first mistake. My sin isn't really that big of a deal and I can manage it, you know.

God's going to work it for good anyway, so what's the big deal? That's a mistake. So verse 28 says, for those who love God, all things work together for good.

[7 : 29] And a casual, flippant attitude towards sin is not loving God, is it? So calling yourself a Christian while making truces with your pet sins is like calling yourself a husband while you're sleeping around.

And if that's you, here's what you do. Right now, decide by God's grace to go to war against your sin and take this verse with you into battle.

Go back to your first love and entrust all those past sins to Christ, all those mistakes, entrust them to Christ's mercy.

Because the good news, the gospel of Jesus is big enough to restore you. So that's the first mistake, is that casual attitude towards sin. Here's the second mistake, is to say, you don't know what I've done.

My sin is so nasty, so big, so shameful, so strong, I'm too far gone.

[8 : 36] Your sin cannot defeat King Jesus. Period. Over and over again, the New Testament makes this abundantly clear that on the cross, Jesus defeated sin and Satan.

They just don't stand a chance against him at all. So Romans 8 begins in our call to worship by reminding us of the complete and total power of Jesus over sin by saying that there is now no condemnation in Jesus.

None. So there's no evil done to us and no evil done by us that God will not bend around on itself to serve our good.

By way of illustration, there's a little town in Germany called Wunziedl. It's very fun to say, Wunziedl. And for years, the citizens of Wunziedl were terrorized by a neo-Nazi group that would come and do an annual march through their city.

It was kind of a parade of terror. And so people would shudder the windows, businesses would close, they would stay off the streets, and they would just hope and pray that Wunziedl wouldn't erupt in violence this year.

[9 : 54] But in 2014, some local businesses and charities took matters into their own hands and they organized, I love this, they organized a secret walk-a-thon. So they raised money, they raised pledges so that for every meter that these neo-Nazis walked, 10 euros would be donated to a charity that helps people escape far-right extremist organizations.

So that year, the citizens turned out in droves to cheer these people on as they marched. And they gave them bananas and water bottles and cheered and waved, and at the end, the neo-Nazis marched across a sign on the ground that said, thank you for raising 10,000 euros. Every step that was intended to terrorize had the exact opposite effect. That's what God does to our evil.

And we know that's true because of the cross. We know God has that kind of power over evil. Who else but God could take evil up in his hands and bend it into good? Who could do that? But at the cross, the worst evil to ever occur was the murder of the Son of God. And at the cross, the greatest good you could possibly imagine came from the murder of the Son of God.

[11 : 21] And if God can make the death of Jesus the vehicle which brings us the glory of resurrection and eternity with God, what chance does our sin and our suffering stand against that kind of power?

Point number two, we've been talking about this good that God is bending evil around to serve, right? So what is that good? Point two, your good is glorious. Let's look at verse 29. 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.

Now I wonder what you consider to be good for you. What do we call good? Financial freedom, comfort, time with our family, lack of conflict in relationships, health. All those things are good, but none of them are the kind of eternally glorious good with the capital G good that Paul has in mind here. Paul's not talking about momentary good or kind of a partial or limited good, one that's going to expire.

[12 : 41] He's talking about ultimate good. Paul's talking about the sort of good that we read in Genesis 1 and 2 that God looked at all that he had made and called it good kind of good.

A deep, deep good, radiantly good. Now in these verses, there's a bit of a Bible sandwich going on. So verse 28 says all things work together for good.

Verse 29 says that our future is to be glorified. That's the bread in the Bible sandwich, good and glorified, right? Verse 29 is the middle of the sandwich conformed to the image of his Son.

So verse 28 makes us ask the question, what is good? Verse 29 makes us, I'm sorry, verse 30 makes us ask the question, what is glorified? And verse 29 in the middle gives the answer.

Conformity to the image of Jesus is our ultimate good and it's glorious. That's the logic of these verses.

[13 : 44] So you'll note on the screen that word for in verse 29, that for means that 29 is supporting and explaining the statement made in verse 28. Let me read it again.

And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Four, right? Supporting and explaining. Four, those whom he foreknew, he also predestined.

Predestined for what? To be conformed to the image of his Son. In order that he, Jesus, might be the firstborn among many brothers.

So God is taking every mistake, every ounce of suffering, every sin in your life, and he's picking it up in his mighty hands. And he's bending it around to make you into the sort of everlasting human who looks like Jesus.

Now that word, I want to talk about the word glorified for a minute. It's a weird word to put there, right? Paul says that we're glorified.

[14 : 50] Hold on, Paul. That's a word for Jesus, not for me, right? How does glorified describe us? Well, Paul's saying that our future, that good of conformity to the image of Jesus, is glorious.

Because we'll be, we'll look like him. And he's glorious. And I don't mean you're going to look like a Nazarene carpenter. You're going to look like Jesus at his transfiguration.

Glory, glowing with God's holiness. A glorious future. And when I look at the sin in my life, I can hardly believe that that's true of me.

But that's the whole point. That's why God is showing us in verse 28, that our sins and mistakes don't keep us from that future.

They're shaped into that future. Romans 8.29 is perspective giving. It gives us a view, a glimpse of God's purpose for us.

[15 : 57] And it just, it gives us a purpose. It gives us a sense of purpose, doesn't it? You know what the devil is terrified of? A church full of justified sinners with a God-given Jesus-fueled sense of destiny with a purpose.

That just makes him tremble. And that's what God is doing in all his people. By his might, God is making our evil serve our ultimate good, and nothing can stop him.

And that's our last point. Nothing can stop him. Verse 30. If we were to ask, hey Paul, that all sounds really good. I'd like that future.

I'd like to believe that. But how certain is that future? How certain is that good? Paul would say eternally certain. A certain is anything.

His answer to that question is verse 30. Those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified.

[17 : 05] And those whom he justified, he also glorified. There is no wiggle room between those verbs.

I wonder what your story of come to Jesus is. What's your conversion story? You know, all Christians have a story of loving and following Jesus. And for some of us that might be, I never knew a day that I didn't trust in Jesus and know the gospel.

And for some of us, it might be fits and starts. And some of us might have come to Christ much later in life. But verse 30, this is your conversion story from God's perspective.

So my perspective is I grew up in a Christian home, but it wasn't until I was about 19 that actually put my trust in Jesus and made him my Lord. And then for the last 13 years since then, I've just been kind of stumbling forward in the faith day by day as best I can by God's help.

And God says of that same story, foreknown, predestined, called, justified, glorified.

[18 : 18] If you're a Christian, that's your conversion story. Now God, you may have noticed, is actually the subject of all of those verbs in verse 30.

The emphasis is not on what we do. The emphasis is on what God has done. God foreknown, God predestined, God called, God justified, God glorified.

So let's just think about each of those words for a moment. So foreknown and predestined. That's talking about kind of God's activity in eternity past, right?

Like before time, before creation, God foreknown you and God predestined you. But if he only predestined us, this just hit me and it kind of blew me away.

If he only predestined us and didn't foreknown us, then God might be disappointed or feel let down or even surprised when I fail him again and again.

[19 : 21] You know, I've got this great destiny for you, this purpose, but you keep messing it up. But that's not what he did. He foreknew us and predestined us.

So he looked into our future and he knew that we would be weak. He knew that we would sin and do it again.

And he chose you anyway. He foreknew us, he predestined us, he called us. So now we're not talking about eternity past anymore, right?

The calling of God is in our experience. It's in our kind of earthly moments. We're called to Christ. But we're not just talking about a gospel offer.

That's not what Paul means by the word called. So he doesn't mean that you heard a presentation of the gospel and then had the, you know, you could consider whether or not to respond.

[20 : 24] And we know that for this reason. Paul, well, for two reasons. First, Paul doesn't say that, you know, out of those whom he called, some responded and he justified those ones.

No, Paul says those whom he called, he also justified. No one slips through the cracks between called and justified and no one ever will.

When Paul speaks, this is the second reason we know this is true. When Paul speaks, uses this word call in Romans, he means something really specific. He's using the, he means the same thing as when God called creation into existence.

That kind of call theologians call it the fiat command of God. God is the God who commands things to be and they are. So for instance, in Romans 4 17, Paul says that God gives life to the dead and calls into existence.

The things that do not exist. So from our perspective, we decided to follow Jesus. We did with our own free choice. We decided to follow Jesus, but from God's perspective, he called us and justified us.

[21 : 42] In other words, here's the truth of the Bible, whether we can totally understand it or not. Our free choice to follow Jesus was the vehicle of God's command.

Put it another way, God ordained our free choice to follow Jesus. What a relief because who among us would have chosen him of our own free will?

So God is the subject of all those verbs and here's why that's such good news. Because your future, your ultimate glorious good of conformity to the image of Christ doesn't ultimately rest on your shoulders.

The emphasis is on God and his power and what he's done. God has a purpose for you. God has a destiny for you. God has determined it for you. God has called you into new creation existence in Christ.

God justified you by sending Jesus to die for your sins and God glorified you by conforming you to the image of his son. God did it.

[22 : 58] Now hold on, glorified isn't glorification in the future, right? Isn't that, you know, we're sinners saved by grace here. We still wrestle with sins and weakness and our flesh and then one day we'll die and go to heaven and then we'll be glorified, right?

So shouldn't it read, those whom he justified, he also will glorify? Maybe Paul made a typo. Here's how certain your future is.

It's so certain that Paul talks about your future in the past tense. Jesus said from the cross, it is finished, done.

The death and resurrection of Jesus completed God's purposes for you with absolute certainty. That's God worth loving.

Won't you love him? If you will, then your glorious future to be conformed perfectly to the image of Christ is inevitable.

[24 : 10] And he's using all your mistakes, all your suffering, all your sins to serve that glorious purpose.

You can look back one day with perspective and say, I loved him because he loved me. And from eternity past, he said his heart on me and I'm so glad.

So it seems fitting to just conclude by reading the rest of Romans 8. Romans 8 verses 31 to 39.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?

[25 : 16] It's 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.

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're being killed all the day long. We're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. No. All these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

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.

So I go back to the first two application points. Is that a God you could love? And if so, will you take your sin and your sorrows to him at the cross?

[26 : 34] Let's pray. Lord, this is almost too good to be true, and I find it hard to believe.

And we're all a mess, and I feel like a huge mess, but I'm really glad to be your mess. And so we just right now together put all the messiness of our lives in your hands, and we trust you with it, and we admire you and worship you for your strength and your power.

And we're so glad that you're not just for us but weak, nor are you apathetic toward us but powerful, but you are for us and powerful, that you're using your might to save us and to make us look like Jesus.

Thank you. Amen.