

And We (Still) Know

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 December 2020

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Well, this evening we come to our last lesson, as far as men's night, of 2020, and are scheduled! to start back on January 4th, 2021.

My plans tonight are to finish verse 28 of Romans chapter 8, and we will start the new year in verse 29 and 30, also called the golden chain of salvation.

That will become clear to us. But as a reminder, verse 28 is a gateway to the remainder of chapter 8 in Romans, which is the classic and greatest testimony, in my opinion, to the perseverance of the saints or the eternal security of the true believer in the Word of God.

Now, that's my opinion. It's an accurate opinion, but it's still my opinion. Let me again quote our focal passage for tonight, verse 28.

And we know, I love those words, 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.

[1 : 28] I should also add that if things go the way they should go tonight, you guys are probably going to get here pretty early.

This is just kind of a clean-up lesson. It starts with those words, we know. The Holy Spirit begins this verse with these vitally important words, and we know.

This phrase is found many places in the Bible, both Old and New Testament. It is found in all four Gospels.

It is in the book of Acts. Paul frequently uses this phrase in his writings. The only two books in the Bible where the phrase, we know, doesn't show up are Titus, and then the short little one-chapter book of Philemon.

But it is the Apostle John who makes the most use of the words, we know. And this is especially true of the Gospel of John where it appears 26 times, and then in the epistle of 1 John, which is only five chapters long, it is used there 17 times.

[2 : 53] So it'd make a great word study for you just to get on Bible Gateway and type in, we know, and read all the verses where it's used.

I think it's pretty clear, it should be, that God doesn't want true believers to guess about their salvation. He doesn't want us to walk around saying, well, I hope I'm saved.

I don't feel very saved today. I know I was saved yesterday, and I hope I'm saved again tomorrow.

He wants us to know. That is what John, when he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the first epistle of 1 John, he had this to say in 1 John 5.13, saying, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And I've said to you on many occasions that word believe is pistou in the Greek language, meaning to trust, to commit your life to. And so it's a powerful word, more powerful than English.

It's English counterpart. So we know. What do we know? We know God causes. And that, again, is a very powerful thought.

[4 : 22] The God of the universe, the Almighty God, El Shaddai, the three persons who are the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, causes things to happen.

And let me say, in our daily life, some of those things are really good, and some sometimes are not so good. They can even be bad. But ultimately, God works good in the life of His children.

Now, it's unfortunate. Many people in the world, and many people even in the church, believe in our time that God causes good things, but Satan causes bad things, and they're in this tug of war, and it remains to be seen who's going to win.

I remember years ago, this pastor said to his church, and said, does God have a counterpart, an evil counterpart? And I said, sure, Satan.

He said, no. There's no counterpart to God. There's no one equal to God. And Satan's not. Satan can't do anything without the permissive will of God.

[5 : 40] And it is God who causes things that He works for good. Satan can do nothing without the permissive will of Almighty God.

So God causes, and He causes, all things to work together for good. We could even say for ultimate good. Life has sometimes been compared to a tapestry.

That used to be really popular. My wife bought those things. Thank goodness they ended up in the attic, and then when she wasn't looking, in the trash can. But we should remember that a tapestry had two sides.

And one side, you know, there was this beautiful, pleasant picture. I've got one hanging in what we call our Scottish room. That's Diane's language. She's Scottish. And it's black-faced sheep in a Scottish meadow.

And it was a tapestry. But if you look at the reverse side, you know, you saw all these threads, and it made no sense whatsoever. It was just weavings of thread.

[6 : 49] They appeared to be randomly placed, and they made no sense whatsoever. But God is the master weaver of both sides.

He may not fully understand what he's doing, but like Dr. McBride, you say, he's always up to something. God's always up to something. Figure out what it is and get on board, because he's always up to something.

God is in control of the tapestry of our life, whether the good side or the side that doesn't look quite as attractive. God's in control of that.

And he works all things together for good to those who love God. And by the way, don't answer this, but when's the last time you told God you loved him?

And I'm sure some of you do that every day. Some of us do it once a year, you know. When you go to him, tell him you love him.

[7 : 49] That phrase belongs only to those whom God has or is saving. That's the people that love God. And even then, there are times when our love for God grows cold and even distant.

You know, the world comes crashing in about us. That happens to me a lot at 3 o'clock in the morning. I'm looking at that dark ceiling and I'm thinking of all the things. 3 o'clock in the morning, they don't seem as bad at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

But at 3 o'clock in the morning, it really seems bad. But when God brings us through those times, it's a very beautiful thing.

It's a very beautiful thing. The great reformer, Martin Luther, he once said in brutal honesty, he said, you ask me if I love God? Sometimes I hate God.

Sometimes I'm so upset that I hate God. He was referring to God requiring of him what Martin Luther could not produce.

[9 : 04] Though he tried and he tried and he tried he couldn't produce a righteousness or shall we say a self-righteousness that was sufficient to please God to the point where God would save him.

And he thought it was so unfair of God and even blurted out once he said, I hate God for that. And that's just how he felt. And then he got a hold of a scroll of Romans and he started through it and he got to chapter 1 verse 17 which spoke of a saving righteousness that comes from God.

It's God's righteousness poured into us that saves us. He sure didn't save me based on any of my righteousness. I don't have any guys.

I'm sorry. I don't have any. I know that's a shock to a lot of people here. It's not a shock to Mike.

We've known each other 40 years. He knows I don't have any. Others of you know that. But he spoke of a saving righteousness that was God's righteousness gifted to his children by grace.

And Martin Luther said when that happened his love for God began to flow. And he never looked back. And then it says to those who are called according to his purpose.

[10 : 42] Called according to his purpose. And actually this is what we've been talking about. And we talked about it a few months ago and now we're hitting it again because it shows up. Again we see this phrase the called.

The called. That's another term for a believer. For a Christian. For someone who's born again or more accurately born from above. Very important Bible term.

We tend to think that the call of God was something that happened in the mysterious past before there was a universe before there were people come in Mark and before there were angels.

It was a time when there was only God but regardless of when the call was issued it did not remain in eternity past.

And we're going to really see that next year. in January. When we come to Romans 8:30.

[11:55] And there it talks about those who are predestined those who are the predestined because they are the called of God. And we're going to spend some time in there.

We're going to spend some time in there. When we speak of the call of God we are speaking about what the reformers very properly called the effectual call.

The effectual call. It is a call that has the desired effect for what it accomplishes.

It's a desired effect or impact upon the recipients. It is a call in other words it accomplishes what God desired for it to accomplish.

Now human calls often don't end so very well. Right? All too often they fail in their purpose they're not effective. But that's not true about the call of God.

[13:07] That's not true. Dr. John Murray who was a great guy died I think in the 50's he said that the effectual call of God's people is the centerpiece of salvation for those who are or will be saved.

It's the centerpiece. The reason we can be sure of our salvation is because it is founded and grounded in the purpose of God.

And nowhere in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the purpose of God ever defeated. It's never defeated.

I tell folks you know why are you so confident in your Christianity I said I've read the end of the book Jesus wins and I'm on his team. I mean we can say we win.

We win. The purpose of God is never defeated. It is not defeated by the world. It's not defeated by the devil and it's not even defeated by our own flesh.

[14:22] Though sometimes we make strides trying to God's plans will not be destroyed even by the flesh. Now we're going to come to a very detailed instruction of this starting in January 2021.

We're going to see the unbreakable chain of salvation and it's an amazing section of scripture. It will start with divine foreknowledge and it's the foreknowledge of God.

It's not my foreknowledge or yours. It's God's foreknowledge and culminate in glorification. That's us in heaven. We're going to be like Jesus because we're going to see him as he is.

And that's where it'll culminate in glory. Another way of putting this is to say that our perseverance is assured because it is grounded in the security of God's purpose and grace.

That's the ground of our salvation. It's for God's purpose. grace. It's by grace and for his glory. Tom Nettles from Southern Seminary, great guy.

[15:40] He wrote a book by your grace and for your glory. And we must also understand though that we are not passive in this calling unto eternal life.

We're active. We're active tonight. He reminds me though of the guy that went out and sat on the stump in the woods to see whether or not God was going to save him.

He said, I think I'm one of the elect. I'm going to sit over on this stump. And he sat there until he died and went to hell. I mean, what is that? It would be like the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus.

He receives instructions from the Lord Jesus himself as to what he was supposed to do. What if instead of that, Paul said, you know, I'm going to sit down here in the desert and wait to see if everything Jesus just told me is going to come to pass.

Well, that would be ridiculous, obviously. And that's not what happened. After being radically saved, and that's a term which Paul, I'm certain, did not yet fully understand, and he wasn't even Paul then, he was Saul.

[16:55] he followed the instructions he received from Jesus. And I'm sure his companions had to help him. He was blind, temporary blind.

And so his companions led the temporarily blinded Paul to the home of Ananias. And the Lord appeared to Ananias and said, you're going to get a visitor.

his name Saul of Tarsus. He said, Lord, I don't want him under my roof. You've got to be kidding me. He kills believers. He killed Stephen. He orchestrated the death of Stephen.

And he said, he's a chosen vessel of mine. I'm going to show him how much he's going to suffer for my namesake. And so we see him taken to the home of Ananias.

And there he stayed until the Lord removed his blindness and when that happened, Paul requested and was immediately baptized.

[18 : 04] He started to grasp what's happening to him. And he immediately wanted to tell others what had happened to him by preaching the gospel.

And he didn't have very much of an audience. they were scared to death of him. This is the guy that gets warrants for our arrest. He was going to haul us back to Jerusalem from Damascus, throw us into prison, and ultimately have us killed.

And now he wants to preach to them. Little did he or anyone know that he would become the greatest preacher and missionary the world had or would ever know.

He was a great preacher, a great missionary, a great church planter. And I've been to some of those churches in what's modern-day Turkey. It's called Asia Minor in the Bible. They're still there, some of them.

Not all of them. You know, we tend to treat this word Christian or Christianity as a noun, but in reality it's more of a verb.

[19 : 12] because our Christian life is intended to be a life in action. It's intended to be a life in action.

Why did this happen to Paul? Well, because Paul was a logical candidate for salvation. Hardly. Hardly.

He was a murderer of Christians. Paul was saved on the road to Damascus for one reason. He had been chosen by God before the foundation of the world and he was brought to faith by the Lord Jesus Christ himself by the power of the summons that belongs to those who are called to belong to Jesus.

You can read about that in Romans 1.6 sometime. He was saved because he was a chosen vessel of the Lord. When we get to Romans 1.7 we find out everyone who believes has been called to be saints.

Everyone who believes has been set apart to God by his call. I guess that begs the question what are you doing with your call?

[20 : 37] you've been set apart. Every believer has been called to be holy by living holy lives. Paul summed this up in the book of Ephesians by saying this.

Ephesians 4.1 I therefore a prisoner of the Lord urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of which you have been called.

I know a person right now who's divorcing his wife abandoning his children and I asked him why and he said because I'm not happy and God wants me happy.

I said there's not one word in the Bible New or Old Testament that says that. It does say God wants you holy and with your family.

So he's moving. He wanted to get away. So here we get to the call even in Ephesians and Paul wrote about it in most of his letters.

[21 : 42] When we talk about the call of God I want us to consider somebody you'll be familiar with. A man by the name of Lazarus.

The brother of Martha and Mary. Can you imagine for a moment if we had been present at the tomb of Lazarus?

I mean let's face facts here. Lazarus was dead in every sense of the word. In fact he'd been dead four days.

I always find that interesting. You know there was a belief not founded in scripture but the Jews used to believe that the soul hovered around the body for three days and after three days if it didn't come back to life it departed.

Well that's not true. But that was a tradition. Well here he'd been dead four days. And it's funny because when Jesus was informed he said we'll get there.

[22 : 49] We'll get there. Lazarus was dead in every sense of the word. He was incapable of doing anything.

That's the definition of being dead. The inability to do anything. Dead people can't breathe. Dead people can't move.

They can't talk or do anything else. Why? They're dead. They're dead. Lazarus was dead and in fact he was dead and decaying.

And that's easy to happen in the Middle East where it's pretty warm. But you I'm sure will remember that when Jesus ordered the tomb opened his sister said they objected and they didn't want that thing open.

They said don't do that. He said he's been dead four days and by now there's going to be a stench. I got an extra page that doesn't belong.

[23 : 56] Glad I caught it. They did not want people to associate that smell and I've smelled it many times in a 47 year career the smell of death with the memory of their brother.

So they wanted him alive but they said well he'll be alive at the resurrection in the future which is yet future for us. The important thing for us to realize though is that Lazarus was dead before Christ called him from the tomb.

We have a calling here. In his condition he would normally be deaf even worse than me to any such call.

He would be stone deaf. if any of us had been present we could have called out to Lazarus loudly or he could have called out eloquently perhaps even persuasively but Lazarus would not have responded because he was dead.

He would have laid there in that tomb lifeless and decaying. but the point that I'm trying to make here is this.

[25 : 20] When Jesus called it was different. It's different. Now remember we are talking about the call of God. The call of Jesus God in human flesh had the power to bring the dead back to life.

Think of that. when that call is issued brainwaves begin again. Blood starts coursing through dead veins.

Lungs take in air. One of these days and I personally think soon the Lord Jesus is going to appear in that eastern sky and issue a call.

It will probably be similar to Revelation chapter 4 where he says John come up here. I think it will be something similar to that. The dead in Christ are going to rise first.

They have six feet further to go. The dead are going to rise and those who are alive and are followers of Christ will rise to meet Jesus in the air.

[26 : 33] I have said many times I hope that's fast because I don't like heights. I don't want to look the going up.

He will be twice raised from the dead. We talk about being twice born. He's going to be twice raised. That was an effectual call. He came out.

That's the call of God. God called him. Interesting that after that happened reports got back almost immediately to the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Sanhedrin.

They had their spies there. They said he's raised a dead man. they said let's go find him and bow down. They said now he must die or the Romans will come and take away our possessions.

Wow. Lazarus was dead and God called him back to life. Every person in this room was once dead in trespasses and sins.

[28 : 12] All of us. Christ called and we were raised to newness of life. Everyone that's a believer in here, we were raised.

Our salvation is all of God. We responded to that call. That is why it is called being born from above. birth. It's a birth that comes down from God and rests on his people. The Lord's call has the power to bring the dead to life.

In the same way, his call quickens those who have been chosen by God to be his people. And none of his called and chosen ones fail to be quickened.

his call is absolute. That's why Jesus said in John 10 27, my sheep hear my voice.

[29 : 16] The call. They hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. A lot of people out here that will tell you they're believers, but they don't follow Jesus.

The believers in Christ, true believers, follow him. believers true believers, follow him.