

GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSE
December 10, 2017 Morning Service
Romans 8:28-30

Take your Bible and go to Romans chapter 8 and we are there. Brother Jon, I'm going to tell you what a lady walked up to me and said the other day. She said, "Pastor, if you don't get with it that young preacher you've got preaching around here is going to take your spot." If you don't get with it, this lady leading that choir today is going to take your spot, I guarantee you. She had you cranked up, didn't she? Amen. Doing a good job. I'm grateful to God for all of these that help us.

Well we're in Romans chapter 8 during these weeks as we're marching through this great, great chapter and we come today to verses 28, 29, and 30. So you find your place in Romans 8:28, 29, and 30. You follow along as I read because this now is the word of our great God.

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. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.¹

For those of you that are in this room or in our Warrington campus place or watching by television, listening by radio, Internet, livestream, in some way, the pastor today is dealing with the text that people love and ignore. They love verse 28 but they ignore verse 29 and 30. Oh they want to say God causes everything to work together for good but then when He jumps into foreknowledge and predestination and calling and justification and glorification they say, "Well we just kind of let that amble on by." Know in the context all of these work together and we'll see that this day.

When you go into a place to make a purchase and if you use a debit card or credit or something and you swipe or put the chip in there then oftentimes the person selling the product will say, "Would you take that stylus and sign the box?" So I do. I never sign my name. Sometimes I sign Donald Trump. Sometimes I sign Tom Brady. I'll sign a football coach's name. I only sign the name of people with big money because I think maybe they'll put my account into their account but it doesn't work. Sometimes I just draw a line and put a period and it seems to work just fine. You've just got to do something in that box. You're supposed to sign your signature. Now when it's

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time to sign the back of a check I sign my signature. Amen. When we buy a new car we sign a thousand times our signature.

I want you to know that God has a signature. It's found two pages over in my estimation from Romans chapter 8. When you turn the page over in chapter 11 and verse 33 I believe you find God's signature. Here's what he says. *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!* I believe the signature of God is unsearchable judgment and unfathomable mystery. God can search into areas you cannot. He can go into depths that you could never walk. I'm telling you, unfathomable riches, mystery is the signature of God.

Dr. Criswell says it this way. I've heard him say it a hundred times and I listened to him again this week when I went and listened to a couple of sermons. He said it in both sermons. He said this: "We as mankind do not understand anything. All we do is look at it." We don't understand anything. We just look at it.

If you ask a scientist about gravity they'll say, "Well that's what holds the earth in place." They don't understand it. They just look at it. It's like centrifugal and centripetal force. The world is going around the sun and turning at the same time. Centrifugal force causes things to move outward but centripetal force causes things to move inward and if both of those things were not working today our planet would jettison out of the solar system's orbit and we would quickly freeze to death. Or if centripetal force was the stronger we'd be pulled to the sun and we'd be French fried but because both of those forces are working – because God when He made the heavens and the earth told the earth, "Be there, stay there, and don't move save when I tell you to." It turns just right and it orbits just right and it tilts just right and it wobbles just right until we just get seasonal change and even once every 50 years we get snow in Pensacola, Florida. But it doesn't last long.

You see, we don't understand all that. Anybody that tells you they understand all that has lied to you. They just simply observe. They look at it and they see. It's like cold and hot. I don't understand nor do you but you see it. Cold causes things to contract. It'll cause you to contract. I saw people walking in this morning. Why do they do that? Trying to get warm. Cold causes you to contract. It's what it does to water and heat causes it to expand but an amazing thing happens when water gets to 32. It stops contracting and it starts expanding. If it didn't do it the ice cap would not be there and the world's oceans would cover the earth but God made it just so. We don't understand that. We just observe it. We see it and scientists study it and they see what they see and they write it down. Not that they understand how or why, they just observe.

I want you to understand, dear friend, this text tells us today that God has a sovereign purpose according to verse 28 and He is at work pushing out and pulling in, making cold and making hot just when it needs to be so that things are just right for you not to live on this earth but being just right for you so you can live with Him for eternity in heaven one day. He has sovereign purpose.

Out of this text today I want to mine three truths that I want you to see about God with me today. There's one in verse 28, one in verse 29, and one in verse 30. We could be here all day talking about all of these words. I could bring people in and sit them on this side and sit people on this side and we could have a theological argument and people would throw down and throw Bibles at each other. They'd get so angry and say, "I'm right and you're wrong." You'll find every kind of thought process about these texts but I'm just a simple gospel preacher. I just want to let the text say what I see it saying to me today. I don't understand it. I'm just going to observe it and see what God says. Three simple truths out of this deep, deep text of the signature of the unfathomable mysteries of God.

Number one. We see that He, that is God, engineers. That's in verse 28. We know that God causes. Now this verse has been mistranslated in some texts where it says that we know all things work together for good. Let me tell you, friend, all things don't work together for good. God causes all things to work together for good. That's the right translation. We know that God causes all things, A-L-L, everything to work together for good to who? To those that love God and are called according to His what? His purpose. That purpose is the word that means a thing set forth. It's the mind of God. It's what God sets forth in our life and God causes all things to work together for good.

One of the greatest texts about that in all the world is in Genesis 50 and verse number 20 where Joseph – you know Joseph. He's that young boy and he's sold into slavery and taken off down to Egypt land. There he's in Egypt and he's in trouble and he's got the coat of many colors. His brother sold him and he rose through the ranks and he was put in jail. Then he went to be the vice president really, second in charge. When he met his brothers in Genesis 50 and verse 20 he said, "As for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive."

What some meant for evil God meant for good and He causes all things to work together for good for those that love God and are called according to His purpose. God is weaving a tapestry in your life individually and our lives together. It doesn't say that God causes all things that happen. It says that He causes everything that happens to work together for good. God is not the originator of your sin but He'll take it and move it together for good. He was not the originator of those brothers' sin against Joseph.

They did that on their stupid own but God takes it and moves it together for good for those that love Him and are called according to His purpose.

I love what R. A. Torrey says about verse 28, one of the greatest sentences I've ever read. He says Romans 8:28 is a soft pillow for a tired heart. A soft pillow for a tired heart. God causes everything in your life, your marriage. God causes everything, your job. God causes everything, your health. God causes everything to work together for good, your family. God causes all things to work together for good, your location. You move off to school for a while. You're there and you find your spouse and God works all of that together.

Man, I look back at my life and I just watch God weaving a tapestry in my own life. You can do it in your life. I was born in Detroit. Why? Lord, I don't know. I can tell you why. God, as I look back, taught me about the fear of race as a little boy in Detroit. We were there in the heat of the race riots. Little did I know that one day that would be in my heart when we would write down, "O God, let Olive be a leader in racial reconciliation in the city of Pensacola, Florida."

Little did I know that I'd walk across New Orleans Seminary Campus and ask Leo Day to come over and help me for four weeks when Dr. Whaley went up to Lynchburg. Little did I know that on the fourth Sunday Leo was here that Katrina would come in and destroy the city of New Orleans and that Leo would come here and be our minister of music. Little did I know that seven years later God would use this church to fashion that man – he had never been a minister of music – to take him to Texas to train others. Little did I know that God was raising up one Jon Tyner there in Knoxville.

I'm just telling you, if you love God and are called according to His purpose and if you'll trust Him, He's weaving a tapestry in your life and He's doing it for good. I'm not telling you everything that happens is good. It's not. I'm telling you, God takes it all and puts it in the Holy Ghost blender and does good if you love Him and if you answer the call of His purpose. If you're all about you, all you'll see is what you can weave. If you just love yourself, you'll just love what you draw. Let me tell you, if you love God and you bow to the calling of God you'll see God begin to weave a picture that you couldn't even think about. It's an unfathomable *musterion*. It's the mystery of God drawing all of that together.

My Lord, I've looked at my life and thought about after that. I was an only child and I just loved sports and went down and worked out for a junior college basketball coach and went to school there. My wife's daddy had died. If my wife's daddy had not died she would have never been at Samford University when I got there. She'd have been at a different school where her daddy wanted her to go but her daddy died and she wound up because of that financial scenario for God to put her in the cafeteria in 1975.

When I walked through, there she was and I was looking my best. I had on a green ministerial association jersey and a pair of red cutoff sweatpants, a pair of high top Converse shoes, some knee socks with three rings around them like everybody wore, hair down to here, flowing locks. I saw her and I said with Samson, "She looks good to me." She later told me she looked at me and said, "My Lord, have mercy." Yeah. She was dating a boy named Wayne, great singer, one of the greatest tenors I've ever heard. I went over and told him, I said, "I'm going to date her." He said, "Well I'm dating her." I said, "Well just move over."

God'll even cause your arrogance to work together for good. I did. Who would know we'd get married and God would take us off to Texas. I wasn't going to Texas. I was going to the First Baptist Church of Calera, Alabama. I was pastoring a little old church and graduated from school. The First Baptist Church of Calera called me. I went down and visited with them. They had a five bedroom parsonage. It was huge. It was the biggest house I've ever been in. I told Liz, I said, "We can come right here. They're running 250 in Sunday School. We can spend our life here. This will be phenomenal."

The day before I was supposed to tell them I was coming I got up and went to the back door of our apartment and there was an envelope taped to the back door. I looked at it. My mother-in-law had driven 90 miles to come to our house. She did not even come in. She taped a note to our door and then went home. She had written me a note. She said, "Pray through whether God would have you go further your education or not." God sent that like a missile into my heart. I resigned my church and moved my wife to Fort Worth, Texas. If I hadn't gone there I would have never come here. I know some of you are praying, "O God, why didn't he go to Calera," but I'm telling you, that was God's move in my life.

God causes in his unfathomable *musterion* all things to work together for good. If you'll love Him and answer His call I'm telling you, He works all of that together for the good of you and the glory of His own name. Our God engineers. He's the greatest engineer you'll ever meet in all your life.

Number two. Not only does He engineer but He elects. He elects. He does. Look at it in verse 29. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son so that He would be firstborn among many brethren. God engineers. Secondly, He elects us. The Bible says He foreknew us. He knew us before. He had foreknowledge.

Now I have post knowledge, don't you? After it happens I know about it but God has foreknowledge. Before it happens He knows about it. He has foreknowledge. He knows that you're going to be saved. He knows you before you get saved. He knows

who's going to trust Him. He knows who He wants to know. Some people say, "He just knows...." No, no, no, friend. Let me tell you, we pray everybody comes to know God. Let me tell you, everybody doesn't come to know God but before the foundation of the world God knew us. It's His mystery. You say, "Preacher, I've got so many questions about that." Well you'll have to get in a long line. People have been arguing about this for a millennium. I'm just telling you, the Bible says God knows. He knows and you ought to thank Him that He knows.

Not only does He foreknow, He has knowledge before it happens. He predestines. He doesn't post-destine. I can post-destine. He gives a predestiny. He tells you about heaven or hell before you know about it. He's got your mark. He knows you're going to heaven before the foundation of the world. You say, "I don't understand that." Get in a long line. Just let the word of God say what it says. He lives, He is sovereign, He elects, and He reveals. He's the great elector. You say, "I don't know if I believe that."

Well just hear the word of God. I could stand up here and read the Bible to you all day long. Just listen to it in John 6 and verse 37. The Bible says: *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me*, in His high priestly prayer in John 17, three different times. Listen to it in John 17:2. Let me get to it. In John 17:2: *Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.* Verse 6 in that prayer. *"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."* Verse 9: *I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours.* Ephesians chapter 1. It's the greatest chapter in the Bible on predestination and election. Listen to three verses there. Ephesians 1:5: *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of [what are those two words?] His will.*

Don't forget. You want to argue about your will? God's got a will. He chooses as well. He chose us. He predestined us. Notice verse number 9. *He made known to us the mystery of [what?] His will [not your will, His will], according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.* Notice verse 11: *also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.* Paul said to the church in Thessalonica in II Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 13 and 14, look at it right up here. *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

He knew you and then He called you. Then one of the greatest verses about election in all of the word of God is in Acts chapter 13. Acts 13 and verse number 48: *When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord;*

and as many as had been appointed to eternal life [What did they do? They] believed. They had been appointed. They had been chosen. They had been elected. They had foreknowledge of God in their life. He had predetermined who they were and those that He chose and appointed to life eternal, those believed.

Nowhere in the word of God do I ever find that God appoints any man to hell. Election is always presented in the positive side. He is appointed. He is elected. He is chosen. He foreknows always to glory. There is not what theologians call in the Bible a double predestination. That is that He ordains some for heaven and some for hell. It's not the will of God that any should perish but that all would come.

Dear friend, you hear me. You cannot get away from in the word of God the sovereign election of the Lord God and you ought to have joy in that. It doesn't let you out of anything. It puts you in a thousand things. It doesn't say we don't do evangelism. It ought to burn our heart to go tell what we've known and found. Election's not a bad doctrine. It can become a bad doctrine. Those that say because of predestination we don't ever tell the gospel, you can't find an anti-missionary spirit in the word of God. Those that say, "Well we don't have to do anything," that's why churches sit and die. He elects. He not only engineers but He elects. I found God – I wasn't looking for Him but I found He was looking for me and I looked up and I said, "Lord, I'm coming to you." He said, "I know," and He receives us.

He engineers. He elects. Number three in this text, He entreats. That's just a word that starts with an "E" that means He calls. It means He invites. He entreats us. Notice what He says right here in verse 30. While He foreknew and predestined, those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. He calls us unto Himself. One little boy said in Sunday School, "Our Father which hollered my name." That's what He did. He was looking for you and He hollered your name. He said, "Come. Come. Come." He calls us and justifies us.

I could stand up here all day and read about election. I could stand up here all day and read about the call of God. Hear it in Romans chapter 9 and verse number 24. The Bible says: *even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.* And then in the next chapter of Romans, chapter 10, verses 9 and 10: *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be [what?] saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* Skip down to verse number 13 and you hear this great old text out of the book of Joel that here Paul quotes and says: *for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

He entreats us to come. He elects us and He entreats us. He engineers our circumstances and He's elected us before the foundation of the world and then He calls

us effectually to come unto Him. I Corinthians chapter 1 and verse number 9: *God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* Galatians chapter 1 and verse 15: *But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased.* That's when that happened. Then of course that great verse that nearly everybody can quote. John 3:16. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that [Whosoever was predestined? No, no, no] whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

This sovereignty of God and the free moral agency of man, people try to set them at odds. Let me tell you, friend, you don't set those at odds. They're like two ribbons of a railway track. They're like the bookends of the word of God. John brought us one of the greatest Baptist theologians that ever was. He said, "Regarding this sovereignty of God and this free moral agency of man" he said, "it's like looking at a house. You can only see two walls at one time. If you're on the ground you can come to one side and see these two but you can't see those over there." He said, "You can run around on the other side and you can see these two over here but you can't see those two over there." He said, "You've got to get above to see all four walls." Such it is with sovereign grace and free moral agency. Only God really understands how all of that is working together for good and drawing us unto Himself.

Spurgeon speaking of these two topics, Spurgeon said that will election and free sovereign will, he said, "I cannot make them come together but you dare not cross them. For they are like ribbons of a railway and for God's redemption to run they must stay parallel because if you ever cross them you will have a train wreck on your hands." There's a lot of train wrecks going on in churches today from some on one side that say it's all about election and man doesn't have anything to do with it and God comes and finds you and puts His foot on your throat and makes you get saved and He sends others to hell. I'm here to tell you, you'll not find that in the word of God. Those are people that have out-calvined Calvin. But yet on the other side there's this group that says God's election is not there and God doesn't know anything and it's all up to me. Let me tell you, friend, if it's all up to you, you'll go to hell.

Salvation always begins with God. It does not begin with you because you'll choose to go to hell every time because you're dead in your sin. You're lost. You say, "Preacher, I don't understand that." Well then get in a long line. It's the unfathomable mystery of God's signature. God causes all things to work together for good.

I think of our friends that are down in Warrington. Did God kill that church? There are principles alive that allow a church to go down. Then for them to make a call for us to become friends and now see life coming there again. I don't understand that. I'm just telling you, God causes all of that to work together for good and for His glory.

He's at work. There are many people today who think in America, we're done. I'm telling you, God's at work.

Do you know that God, 200 years before Cyrus ever lived, God said that Cyrus was going to come and rain judgment on God's people? Friend, God hasn't forgotten the United States of America. He may be raining judgment. I don't know. That's up to God. My job is to be faithful and I know He's causing all things to work together for good.

I'm so glad I haven't got to vote Tuesday in Alabama. I heard this week that Pensacola is nine miles, 20 miles, and 40 miles from Alabama. When the President came here, I heard all that. I said, "One of ya'll ought to come down here and drive over there." What's going to happen? I'm just telling you, if you love God He'll cause all of that to work together for good. He will. You say, "Pastor, what if the wrong one wins?" It won't surprise the Lord who wins. You've got to get your trust out of D.C. and get it into the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. He'll cause all of that to work together for good if you'll love Him, if you'll answer the call of His purpose.

There's a great old text found two places in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 30 and verse 19 and then Jeremiah 21:8 quotes it. Moses said it in Deuteronomy. One man I read this week said that Deuteronomy is the saddest book in the Bible. The more you read it the more it really is. In Deuteronomy 30:19 and Jeremiah 21:8 God says, "I set before you life and death." God's always given us choices. The same Jesus that – I started to say hung on that cross but He's not there this morning. In that window that's up there most of the time there's a cross on either side and He sat before those malefactors life and death and one chose life and one chose death and it didn't surprise God. He knew which one would because He had foreknown it and predestined it.

You sit in this room today and God sets before you life and death. Choose you this day whom you will serve. I'm working with a guy right now. He's lost. I was standing in line buying some things at a store, signing another man's name with a stylus. A lady walked up to me. I love – people don't – it's difficult. I understand it. She asked with a question in her voice. She said, "You're Pastor Traylor, aren't you?" I don't know if she wasn't sure or if she didn't think I was sure. I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "We've been coming to your church." Then she told me what was going on and that they wouldn't be here today but they'd be back. She gave me information and contact information.

So I began to contact her husband this week. The last text I got from him was he said, "Pastor, we haven't been coming to your flock very long." Well I knew he had some church in him or he wouldn't know the word flock but he doesn't know the Shepherd. He said, "I've got a little physical issue as you know my wife told you about. I'll soon be on my feet." He said, "I would like to sit and talk to you about the things of

the Lord in the coming days. Can we do that?" I said, "Goodness yes." So how's all that working? So did God know where I was going to be and put that woman there? On the very day when he had that procedure that would put me there to get written down his phone number to be able to share the gospel. Unfathomable mysteries.

Let me give you a sentence that some of you would all say Amen to but some of you really don't believe this and you need to believe this today. God is smarter than you. Can I get a witness? God is smarter than you and He's at work when you're asleep engineering all things to work together for good if you love Him and are called according to His purpose.

If you've got a child gone off to college, you better be praying. God'll put somebody in the circle of that person and you'll get a phone call and they'll say, "I think I found the one I'm going to marry." My Lord. Then you run to Facebook. Let me encourage you to do that but before you turn on the computer would you just hit your knees? Because God already knows everything on that computer screen and the part that's true and the part that's not. Do you know you can make up a fake account? I wouldn't know anything about that, I'm just telling you. God knows He's underneath and above and He's working everything for good.