

## **“The Golden Chain:” Part 3**

### **Romans 8:28-31**

**TEXT/INTRO:** Growing up in rural Union County, N.C., during the ‘50’s and ‘60’s, I never had a teacher who taught evolution in a favorable light. I don’t know for sure that none of my teachers from the first grade to the twelfth didn’t believe in evolution, but if they did they never tried to teach it. Darwin and then the people involved in the so-called “Scopes Monkey Trials” in Tennessee and the public education system have succeeded in getting it taught in our public schools and I only have a little concern about that fact. Rather than raising a big stink about evolution in our public schools I’ll fall back on the First Amendment rights that protect Christians and all religions from government takeover. That will come up later this morning when we take a second look at the “all things” in Romans 8:28.

Take your Bible and turn once again to the passage that has been referred to as “**the golden chain,**” that being Romans 8:28-31. I fully intended to preach one sermon from this passage two weeks ago, why, I don’t remember, but as I began studying it again, and it and got deeper and deeper, I realized that my folks at Eastway might need to know more about this business of foreknowing and calling and choosing and electing and predestinating. This passage is one of most encouraging passages in all the word of God. I don’t know why so many church folk are afraid of it.

Ironically, there are those who see this same passage as something to be avoided at all cost. They seem to believe that John Calvin must have put it in the Bible because it contains words used by notorious Calvinists since around 1590 or so. But Calvin had nothing to do with these verses being in the Bible. That’s silly, isn’t it? It’s like folks who say “I only use the King James Bible. If it was good enough for Jesus, it’s good enough for me.” Yeah, right.

Did you know that John Calvin died in 1565 only a couple of years after his final edition of his monumental works, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion” was finished? And furthermore, did you know that his theology wasn’t called “Calvinism” until his followers framed his

theology with the well-known acronym T.U.L.I.P. over forty years later? So, T.U.L.I.P. wasn't John Calvin's idea, but his followers.' Calvin's theology is sound in spite of what his detractors say, perhaps not perfect, but sound.

But there are local churches who don't want their pastors mentioning Calvinistic sounding words much less preaching about predestination and election and calling and choosing and foreknowing even though all those words are in the Bible. These dear souls see a "Calvinist conspiracy" behind any preaching that dares deal with the words in the golden chain. That's as frightening and confusing to them as the coronavirus and Black Lives Matter are to NYC Mayor Bill DeBlasio.

**Romans 8:28-30:**

*<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

*<sup>29</sup> 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;*

*<sup>30</sup> and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

*<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (Rom. 8:28-31 NAU)*

As usual, I'm going to draw an observation or two from our passage even if they all come from v.28 only, as they probably will. *<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

I think it goes without saying that "things" can't independently work together to produce anything of importance. It's like the theory of evolution that tries to convince people that the world and the universe and all that's in them happened by accident. And furthermore, we believe that since God created all things then it is God who is working all things together, not chance or accident.

My **first** observation is this, **“The gift of faith explains how God works all things together for our good.”**

*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,*

Beloved, that’s faith. Paul is talking about faith. We know and we’re convinced that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. That is faith. Faith is knowing, faith is trusting and believing that what the word of God says as it applies to us is true.

But it isn’t “blind faith,” it is the I-am-convinced kind of faith. It is the “I know that I know that I know” kind of faith. It is the kind of faith that only comes by God intervening in our hearts and minds and spirits when we were spiritually dead and completely helpless and hopeless. Suddenly we understood the gospel. Suddenly we were convinced that Jesus is who God says He is. I believe solely because God gave me the gifts of faith and light and life over 46 years ago. **“The gift of faith explains how God works all things together for our good.”**

**Second, “God is always working in those who love Him.”**

**God is like an ant. He never sleeps, He never tires and He never stops working.**

Note this, church, when our English versions of the Bible say, *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God*, the Greek text is literally saying this, *And we know that all things **are working** together for good to those who love God.* “Are working” is that kind of verb. You and I and everything in our lives at this very moment is being worked together by God for our ultimate good and His ultimate glory. It doesn’t seem like it, but **it is true**. Why? Because God Himself called us to be His children knowing full well who and what He was getting. God planned to continue working in His children from day one of their lives. He knew, of course, that we would need Him.

Listen to this from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling;*

<sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (Phil. 2:12-14 NAU)

**Third, “I know where God works.”** Do you know where God is right now? I do, He’s at work. “...it is God who is at work.” And I know where God works. He works in us. *it is God who is at work in you.* We know where God is at any given moment, He is at work. And we know where God works all the time, He works in us. **“God is always working in those who love Him.”**

**Fourth, “I know why we love God.”** “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” No one listening to me preach this morning can boast and say, “See, I love God and that’s why He loves me.” But my friend, you know in your heart of hearts that that simply isn’t true. Even your love for God is His gift. <sup>19</sup> *We love, because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19 NAU).* **Dead people can’t love God except He intervene in their lives.**

We were all dead, spiritually speaking, and separated from God and totally without hope. <sup>11</sup> *Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision " by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands--*

<sup>12</sup> *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

<sup>13</sup> *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:11-13 NAU)*

The “all things” in Romans 8:28, that’s what they list consists of.  
\*Repeat them.

**“...to those who are the called.”** Do you see the word “the” just before the word “called?” Paul lets it be known that there is a very distinct group of ungodly human beings whom God calls to be His children, they are called “the called.” Who are these people and what makes them so special that God would call them rather than a billion

others? They're special only because they're called. And don't worry about that other billion. God desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It won't happen, but not because God hasn't made it available to all in some form or fashion through the gospel.

Think about Abram. Abram and his family were idolaters before God called him and Sarai out of Ur of the Chaldees. Out of all the people on earth at the time, God chose to call Abram, the idol worshiper, to become His chosen vessel to be "the father of many nations." The calling of Noah and Abram set the fallen world on a new path. That means that every descendant of Abraham and Sara were also the called who are included in the working together for the good of those whom God would extend His call to. It's called "the Abrahamic Covenant." And it is those who are of Abraham, who have the same faith he had who are the called according to God's purpose.

Did you know that Abraham heard the gospel in the promise of God to make him the father of many nations, AND, that the Bible calls him a "believer?"<sup>8</sup> *The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."*

<sup>9</sup> *So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. (Gal. 3:8-9 NAU)*

Beloved, when it comes right down to it, no one "deserves" to be called or chosen or saved. No one. It is all of God. The Bible tells everyone living on the face of this little planet that we are all born dead and enemies of God. But now, solely because God has worked all things together for our good and is right now continuing that work, we are alive in Christ. <sup>13</sup> *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13 NAU)*

Do you know where God is? I do. He's at work.

Step back for a moment and take a good close look at yourself and your life. How are you doing, spiritually speaking? How are you doing as far as living out your faith is going? How do you handle the

## 6

temptations to sin that pop up in your life every day? How do you handle it when you give into those temptations? How's your relationship with your family? Do you see any reason to believe that God can't handle everything in your life, the "all things" in your daily life?

Do you know why you called upon the name of the Lord and were saved? Because you are the called. The called will always call upon the name of the Lord.

So, those Biblical words, called, chosen, elect, foreknow and predestined aren't so scary after all, are they? And they're all Biblical.

In Jesus name. Amen