

You Don't Look Adopted

Mother's Day

5.11.25

Message 35

Romans Series

Romans 8:28–30 (CSB)

²⁸ We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

Opening:

I remember a story when I was probably 7-8 years old. My sister Sharon, who is 18 months younger, and I were working with my dad in the summer. My dad was in charge of the school bus barn and it was pretty common for one of us kids to spend part of the day with dad working around the garage. One day, we must have been bored and getting in trouble, our dad was trying to keep us entertained. He had been working on an old, gasoline school bus, and it needed to be driven around. So he put us kids on the bus and took us a few miles to the neighboring town of Brandsville.

As you know, sometimes a kid gets a crazy idea in their head. And that idea, as crazy as it seems, can feel real. As we were riding in that school bus, it dawned on me why Dad was taking Sharon and I and driving us around in the middle of nowhere: He was going to dump us off and leave us.

Being the older brother, I masterfully convinced Sharon that this was real, and before long, we were both in a panic. Dad was going to leave us. He had brought us outside of town so we couldn't walk home. He was going to dump us and leave us, and we would never make it home again. And panic ensued.

Dad had no idea why we were upset, but he started getting frustrated, aggravated, and he eventually turned the bus around and what ensued was a pretty unhappy conversation for us kids.

At some point, Dad asked something to the effect, "What is wrong with you?" And our response was, "You're going to leave us and never come back." Why we thought that I'll never know. My dad is not that kind of man, and he became frustrated and rightfully so. Can you imagine your kids questioning your goodness and kindness because they somehow imagined or believed that you were going to abandon them? You gave them no evidence, no inclination, no reason to think this. But for some reason I had convinced myself that my Dad wasn't being nice to us for taking us on a ride, but he was actually trying to hurt us.

B. Have you accused God of doing the same thing?

1. When we enter hard times, times of suffering, times of difficulty, and times of pain, do we accuse God of abandoning us?
2. I think we do because we don't have a good grasp of how big God is, how great His purposes, and how secure is His calling.
3. **It is necessary for us to grasp the big picture of who Paul is talking about in our passage.**

Romans 8:28–30 (CSB)

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1. Salvation and God's Plans

A. Many Christians understand this passage to refer to individuals that God chose long before our first breath to either be condemned to hell or to heaven.

1. This means that if we are one of the elect or predestined, then no matter what we do, we will end up accepting Jesus and going to eternal life because we are predestined and predetermined.

2. I want to go on record that churches that teach forms of unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints (one saved, always saved) are usually people with a deep love of God and Scripture.

3. But, I don't think that is what Paul is saying here.

B. We understand that election and predestination are not contrary to self-will.

1. God can foreknow our decisions and know who would accept and reject Jesus.

2. I also believe Scripture teaches that God uses the hardness of human hearts to bring about his purposes.

a. For example, Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and his people, and God used that hardness to bring about the Exodus.

b. Another example, Judas Iscariot, was a willing vessel to accomplish God's plan.

c. God didn't force Judas to betray Jesus, but used Judas' hardness.

3. Foreknowledge is not the same as determination, where God selects some for eternal life and some for eternal death.

C. This understanding of salvation is partly because I think the Apostle has the Church in mind, not specifically individual believers here in Romans 8.

1. The church of Jesus will not fail, fall away, be defeated, or lose.

a. The Church, because of Jesus, is ordained for glory, called according to his purpose, and will be conformed to the image of his Son.

b. Jesus declared to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

c. This declaration had more in mind than only Peter, but reveals God's divine plan for the people of God.

d. Even when people are unfaithful, God still is.

2. The Apostle's declarations apply to every believer as we hold on to Jesus through faith.

a. When we believe in Jesus, we are made part of Christ's body.

b. We are members together, with Jesus as the Head.

c. We experience victory because Jesus is victorious

3. If we depart from the faith, then we are no longer part of Christ.

a. Apart from Christ, defeat becomes our future, death becomes our destiny.

b. Just because I might fall away, that does not mean the Church is falling away.

c. Just because individuals wander away, that doesn't mean that Jesus and His Kingdom are losing.

d. I can lose out, miss the mark, and be cast aside into eternal judgment, but the Body of Christ, the Church, is destined and elected to prevail.

e. The Kingdom of God is bigger than you and I, and my failure does not mean that Jesus has failed.

D. When we read this passage, we must keep in mind that it is first for the Church and then for me.

1. The promises are mine as long as I'm connected to Christ.

2. Apart from Christ, I have no hope that things are working together for good.

3. In fact, I can know that they aren't.
4. My circumstances may look like blessings, but if they are devoid of God's presence, they aren't a blessing; they are a deception.

2. All things work together.

A. Paul speaks of the goodness and trustworthiness of God.

1. It isn't the things that are good, but God that is good.
2. This is Grace, no Karma.
3. But this promise, this declaration, has an exclusionary clause.

B. These words apply only to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

1. The word "love" is a present, active verb/participle.
2. It's not past tense, meaning a one-time decision in the past that brings future blessing.
3. Neither is it passive, meaning we are being acted upon.
4. It is a present action that we continue to act in.
 - a. It's the difference between "I loved my wife" and "I love my wife."
 - b. One indicates an action in the past, without signifying present relation.
 - c. The other indicates my present and ongoing action and choice.
5. In other words, "love is a verb."

C. This doesn't mean that the harder you work, the more God works for your good.

1. Because, as one commentator says, “Loving God” sums up the basic inner direction of *all* Christians—but *only* of Christians.¹

2. But it does mean that this divine Grace is applied to those who are presently and actively loving God.

3. This is good news for the believer: you don’t have to work harder to have God love you more.

D. The flipside is that if you are not a believer, if you are not walking with Jesus in faith and obedience, then you cannot lay claim to this grand statement: all things work together for good.

1. It means that if you are living life apart from Christ, then Spirit is not interceding for you with groans.

2. Jesus is not interceding for you at the right hand of the Father.

3. You are not more than a conqueror.

4. Instead, you are subjected to the wages you deserve; the wages of sin are death.

5. And death begins long before you take your last breath.

3. Love God!

A. How do we know we love God?

1 John 5:1–5 (CSB)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. ²This is how we know that we love God’s children: when we love God and obey his commands. ³For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden, ⁴because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 530.

faith. ⁵Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

How do we know we love God?

1. We profess Jesus as Lord and make Him Lord of our life.
2. We obey His commandments and Word.
3. We love those that God loves.
4. We stay connected to Christ through faith.

B. Therefore, because God has great plans for His son Jesus, plans that involve victory and life and joy and peace, we receive with Him those same benefits.

1. It's like getting the VIP treatment, not because we are the VIP, but because we are with the VIP.
2. His benefits are ours to enjoy, as long as we stay connected to Christ.
3. The purpose of this connection and the reason for all the blessings and power is so we might be conformed to the image of his Son.

4. Conformed to the image of his Son

²⁸ We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

A. God intends for the church to be conformed to the image of his Son.

1. He predesigned, predetermined, that those who would follow Christ and accept Him by faith would be conformed to the image of Christ.
2. Conform here means "having a similar form, nature, or style."
BDAG

3. This means that the Church, and thus we, will look like and resemble the Son.

B. Mom's, how many of you have a daughter who looks just like you?

1. How many of you have a daughter who acts just like you?

2. Dad, how many of you have a daughter who acts just like their mother?

3. Isn't it amazing how some children are mirror images of a parent?

C. In my family there are three of us kids.

1. It is obvious, I look like my dad. (PICTURE)

a. There is no mistaking whose kid I am, and that is partly why I don't have a beard, cause I'm not ready to be my dad yet.

b. The middle sister, Sharon, is a pretty good mix of mom and dad. And personality-wise, she and I are super close.

2. Then there is the youngest sister, who we are convinced is adopted.

a. Now that she is getting older, she turned 35 last week, she looks and acts like our mom.

b. But for the longest time, we were convinced she was adopted.

1. In fact, one of the JH/HS teachers, who worked with my dad and went to church with us didn't even know she was related.

2. She walked into Junior High science class, and the teacher saw her last name and asked if she was related to Paul and Sharon. He had no idea that she was related.

D. In Christ's family, we are all purposed, called, and predestined to look like Jesus.

1. Our most fundamental calling, one we all share, is to look like Jesus, to reflect His image, to copy his mannerisms, to be conformed to his likeness.

2. We don't want to look like an outlier, where nobody would guess that you are a follower of Jesus.

3. Instead, we are called to be conformed and swallowed up by His image.

E. For now, we represent Jesus imperfectly.

a. We all sin, make mistakes, and fail.

b. We do not live this out perfectly.

c. However, our destination has been predetermined:

1. By staying connected in Jesus, we are perfectly called, justified, and glorified.

2. We are still in the midst of this, but the destination is assured.

3. If we do not depart from the faith, each of us can boldly declare, "This will all work for my good."

4. The situation might not be good.

5. The groanings and pain are real, signifying it is not as it should be.

6. But I know where God is leading, and I know it is good.

5. Firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

²⁹ For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

A. Are there any firstborn children here?

1. Firstborns are the best.

2. It is a fact, so let's look at the deductive reasoning:

1. Jesus is the firstborn, and He is the best.
2. I am the firstborn of my family.
3. Therefore, I am the best in my family.

3. Let me give you some inductive logic to prove this: My sister graduated high school based primarily on my merits, not hers.

- a. She would skip class a lot, but she would get a free pass because she was "Paul's sister."
- b. One time, she hopped a train with a friend and was accidentally dropped off miles into Arkansas.
- c. She was once at a school choir event in another town and skipped out to go eat ice cream at a local dairy freeze and got all of the schools in attendance in trouble.
- d. But because she was my sister, people treated her better than she probably deserved.

B. Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

1. The firstborn, in that culture, prepares the way.
2. The firstborn guarantees the lineage of the family.
3. The firstborn inherits a larger portion and acts in place of the father and with the father's authority (think Luke 15).
4. Paul told the Colossians:

Colossians 1:18 (CSB)

¹⁸ He is also the head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have
first place in everything.

C. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

1. He prepared the way for us and made possible what was impossible.
2. Jesus inherits the place of power and authority, honor, and glory.
3. And because we are with Jesus, co-heirs with Christ Jesus, Jesus shares with those who love Him and follow Him.
4. Jesus is the Older-Brother who, instead of rejecting the lost Son, took upon Himself the shame we deserved.
5. Jesus is the Older-Brother who restores the inheritances we have squandered in sinful living.
6. Jesus is the Older-Brother who stands before the court of God's justice and says, "I will pay the debt."
7. Jesus is the Older-Brother who intercedes to the Father on our behalf.

D. Because of Jesus, our present and future hope are secured.

1. Secured by His blood.
2. Securing for us, his brothers and sisters, a future infinitely greater than we deserve.
3. Securing for us that, no matter what may happen in this world, the groanings, the pain, and the sorrow will be transformed for good.

6. Who defines the Good?

A. We all know that children and adults have different definitions of good.

1. Part of maturity is being able to recognize and determine what is good and what is evil.
2. What is healthy and what is unhealthy.

B. In our Spiritual walk, we will struggle with God's definition of good.

1. You might be walking through a situation right now and wonder, "How can God ever make this good?"
2. How can loss, pain, struggle, persecution, and conflict EVER work out for good?
3. And when we insist on using only our definition of good, I can assure you that we will be often and regularly disappointed.

C. The greatest example of God working together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His Purpose is Jesus upon the Cross.

1. We call it Good Friday, not because Jesus' pain was good, but because God was present on that dark day.

- a. God's goodness was present in every stripe laid upon Jesus' back.
- b. God's goodness was upon Jesus' head even as the crown of thorns were forced down.
- c. God's goodness was held in Jesus' hands as he received the nails attaching Him to the cursed tree.
- d. None of these things were good: But God was working them together for our good.

2. When we endure hardship, remember that God is present.

- a. The hardship is most likely not caused by God.
 1. I say most likely because God does discipline and correct us, like loving fathers do.
 2. As every child knows, correction often feels like hate instead of love.
- b. But God is not the originator of evil.
- c. The pain, suffering, and struggle is caused by sin and redeemed by the Blood of Jesus.

Apply: What do I do with this message?

A. First and foremost, how is your relationship with Jesus today?

1. Are you actively loving God and following His purpose for your life?
2. Or are you walking in rebellion, knowing what you are doing is wrong but doing it anyway?
3. If you have wandered away from Jesus or have never made Him Lord of your life, please don't let today pass you by.
4. God loves you and has a future for you that results in the ultimate victory over sin and death, but it is only available if you are connected to Christ.

B. Are you in a season where the things that are happening look irredeemable?

1. It's hard to see any possible victory.
2. It's hard to see any good resulting.
3. It's hard to see God's faithfulness and goodness.
4. If so, I want to pray a prayer of encouragement for you today.

QUOTE:

We are predestined or foreordained by God to attain the ultimate victory over sin and death but only as members of Christ's body. So the crucial question shifts to whether or not one lives by faith as a member of that body. God provides the enablement, but God won't persevere for us! In other words, we are not in Christ's body because we've been predestined to glory; rather, we are predestined to glory because we are in Christ's body. It's a promise that we continue to claim in enduring faith. Frank Macchia.