

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Seventh Sunday after Trinity, August 7, 2011**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 517, 532, 529, 518:1-5, 528:1-3.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 4:31-39, Ephesians 1:1-14, John 15: 9-19.

Sermon Text: Romans 8:28-30.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

God has done absolutely everything necessary for our salvation. God wants us to have no anxiety while we are waiting for judgment day, in our prayer life, or in any other problem facing us, for that matter. God assures us that nothing can seriously threaten our spiritual status, because we are objects of his love, chosen from eternity. The favorable outcome is sealed and certain. ***“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose***

When we don't like what we think God is doing, or when we fret about what we think God is not doing, it helps to take a deep breath and realize that his most important emotion toward us is love. Everything he does, and everything he chooses not to do is driven by his passionate love for his people. He loves his children far more than any of us fathers or mothers love our kids. He loves us far more than we love anyone else.

In addition, we may suffer many experiences that hurt, that trouble us, that oppress us, such as sickness, bereavement, financial losses, trying personal, home, civic and even world situations. When that happens, we have God's assurance that the cup does not contain poison, but medicine wisely chosen by the great physician of souls for our eternal welfare. We need to be reassured that our future is in the hands of a loving God.

We need to remember that whatever God promises in his Word he will do. When God promises that he will be with us throughout our life and provide for our every need, we ought to believe that without wavering. He promises, ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you,”*** Hebrews 13:5.

We do not know what lies in the future on earth for us as followers of Christ, but we know in whose hands the future lies. Everything depends on what the Lord wants for us. And so we should willingly follow him wherever he leads us according to his will and Word. We are never to doubt for a moment that his ways are always best for us.

The first verse of our sermon text is a verse that has provided countless hours of comfort for countless Christians. When things aren't going well, the child of God looks to God for comfort, encouragement and help.

**“IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM,  
WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE”**

- 1. These are marvelous words of comfort.**
- 2. These words comfort those who have been called according to God's purpose.**
- 3. God has done everything necessary for our salvation and for delivering that salvation to us.**

This is a most precious word of God that has comforted us many times when we experienced trouble and affliction and what we have thought of as something bad happening. Every kind of painful experience in our lives, every strange thing that may happen to trouble us, every sorrow that we experience, God says, will work together for our good. As dear children of God, believers in Christ have this conviction by faith. This is a comfort that no unbeliever can possibly have. But believers are those who love God because they are those in whom God's call to salvation in the Gospel has been effective. Believers are people who have been brought to accept the blessings in Christ in the Gospel. These are the believers Peter speaks of and describes in these

words ***“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”*** 1 Peter 2:9 It is a matter of the certainty of faith for believers that also the sufferings of this present time work together and serve for good, and therefore also for the glory which God has in mind for us. In accordance with the purpose of God everything, also affliction and suffering, must result in a good and salutary way for believers.

Paul in this chapter of Romans has been talking about suffering. This section begins with the words: ***“Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”*** Romans 8:17-18. Believers suffer for Christ in many ways, such as when they publicly confess his name. One picture from Scripture of this is bearing the cross for Christ’s sake. Not only do believers suffer, but all of creation suffers and groans because of sin. Last week you heard how the Holy Spirit prays for us even when we don’t know what to pray.

And now as a conclusion of the fact that Christians suffer while waiting for Christ to come in judgment, we have the assurance that in everything God is working for the good of his saints, believers.

These words are some of the most comforting we can find in Scripture. Paul says we know that in all things God works for the good of believers. We know because God tells us. And God’s word is truth. The text says ***“God works for the good of those who love him.”*** But we dare not stop reading the sentence at that point. God works for the good of those who have been called according to his purpose. ***“We love him, because he first loved us.”*** 1 John 4:19. We cannot love God without his love coming first. Our love is a fruit of faith. As believers who recognize our sinfulness, we are wrong if we think that God works for the good of those who love him BECAUSE they love him, because we then have to ask ourselves if we love God well enough to fit into such a category But the rest of the verse emphasizes it is not what we do but what God has done for us that makes all the difference. No matter what happens, it works for the good of those who have been called according to God’s purpose. And God’s purpose includes eternal salvation. We could also think of the purposes God may have for us even here on earth, such as sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as we can.

Believers in Christ can and should rest assured that everything involving their salvation has been taken care of by a gracious God. From eternity he has been active in their salvation. Paul presents a chain of events that makes the child of God realize that his or her promised inheritance is absolutely sure and certain. In the next verse he talks about that calling according to God’s purposes.

***“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*** The things that are listed here cover the time from eternity in the past to the present and on into the eternal future. In his mercy God foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us.

The decree of election was made in eternity before anything was created, but the actual carrying out of this decree takes place in time.

The calling of God is the result of His previous foreknowledge: He knew all who believe in him beforehand as His own. It was an eternal foreknowledge coupled with effective love. He fixed His mind upon them in grace. He selected them in advance as such whom He would, in time, make His own. And in accordance with this foreknowledge the call of God was issued to them and was effective in them when they heard the Word of the Gospel. But before this took place, there was a second act on the part of God: For whom He foreknew He also foreordained, determined, decreed, elected to be conformed to the image of His Son.

This is an election of **grace**. God did not elect us to salvation because he saw ahead of time that we would believe the Gospel. He chose us because of his undeserved mercy and love in Christ Jesus. Nothing is said in our text of those who refuse to believe in Christ and are damned to hell in eternity by their own fault. There is no such thing as God electing some to eternal damnation, a teaching originating in man’s human reason. Of those whom God chose by his grace in Christ, our text also says that God determined that they

should be “conformed to the image of His Son” in their lives. God’s purpose in doing this was that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brothers. In this way, He glorified Jesus, his Son.

God foreknew us from eternity, that is, by his grace God chose us in advance from eternity before we ever had a chance to lift a finger or do anything to win his favor and approval. That is grace. This doctrine is also found in our Epistle lesson today.

Those God foreknew he also predestined. Here’s that beautiful word predestination. This is a doctrine that is given for the comfort and assurance of believers. To people who think that God predestines people to eternal damnation it is a scary word. But God does not predestine anyone to damnation. We are to pray for all men as scripture tells us: “[such prayer] *is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” 1 Timothy 2:3-4. Man rejects God and thus forfeits eternal salvation. For the believer the word predestination is an encouraging word, a word that gives us confidence in what God has done. Predestination is most simply this: From eternity God predestined the elect to share in the blessing of his son. In order to bring that about, he called them in their time of grace here on earth. Through the means of grace, through Word and sacrament, he invites them to accept the righteousness of Christ and thus become sons of God and heirs of heaven.

They did not “make a decision for Christ”, for they were spiritually dead by nature. It was entirely the work of the Holy Spirit that they were made spiritually alive in Christ. He wanted believers to share in the boundless blessings that now are the rightful possession of Christ. We belong to Christ. We are sons of God.

And those he called he also justified. God’s calling comes through the means of grace. The Holy Spirit, working through these means, works the faith through which the believer individually accepts the righteousness Christ earned for all the world. Thus we believe that God has justified us, that is, declared us not guilty of all our sins because Jesus Christ lived a perfect life in our place and died in our place to pay the price for all our sins. Here Paul is talking about personal acceptance of the righteousness Christ earned, whereby God declares the individual believer to be just and holy, acceptable as a son and heir. This is also called subjective justification.

Those God justified he also glorified. Believers justified and secure under the protecting care of a gracious God are already sharing in God’s glory. But the full realization of that glory will not come until Judgment Day. The believer’s full glorification will come only in heaven. However what God has promised is as good as done. Thus Paul can use a past tense of the verb glorify here in adding the last link in the chain of unbreakable certainties that mark the whole course of a Christian’s existence. God has done absolutely everything necessary for our salvation. In his mercy he foreknew us, predestined us, called us, justified us, and glorified us.

If we wonder if we are one of the elect, we have to ask ourselves if we believe in Jesus as our Savior. If we can answer yes, then we are one of God’s elect. God has chosen us from eternity and made us his dear children by faith in Christ by means of the Gospel. Paul told the believers at Thessalonica, “*From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” 2 Thess. 2:13-14 Knowing this removes all our fears and fills us with comfort and assurance.

Jesus has power over the powers of sin and darkness. Jesus beat the devil by coming back to life. God not only has the power to create life but the power to bring someone back to life! And that power is all for your eternal good! What a joyous, comforting message that we can rejoice: “*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*” Thanks be to God! Amen.