

The Christian's Progression – Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:29-30

Preached on: Sunday, February 12, 2012

It is my joy to minister the Word of God to you again this morning. We continue in our study of Paul's epistle to the Romans. So will you take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter eight.

This morning we begin the first of a two part series on the Christian's progression, speaking of that progression that God has ordained to save those who believe.

I am going to look specifically this morning at verses 29 and 30 and actually, for the most part, verse 29.

But let me begin with verse 28, because it all fits together.

Romans eight beginning with verse 28.

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 whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.¹

Pundits, politicians, prognosticators are all asked what in the world is going on. Where is our economy headed? Where is our country headed? Where is the world headed? And everybody has got a different opinion. Opinions are like noses. Everybody has got one. Only the Christian can answer those questions, at least in general, because as we look at the Word of God we know that the world is being prepared for the antichrist. We know that the world is being prepared for a one world government, a one world economy, a one world religion under a one world diabolical ruler. And at the end of that there will be a day of judgment.

And we are thankful that we have the Word of God that can help us understand these things.

In an unstable world of uncertainty, it is profound comfort to know that the purposes of God cannot be thwarted, especially with respect to those of us who have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel sorry for those who have never bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus. They have to look upon this world and see nothing but chaos. They have no idea where things are headed. In fact, for the most part the world believes that we are nothing more than sophisticated germs that have evolved somehow out of chaos, that we

¹ Romans 8:28-30.

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are the products of random chance. So for them there is no God, therefore no purpose, no hope, no joy, no meaning in life, so let's just eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

But not so for the believer. We know God. And we know that he has a purpose for us. Therefore, we have hope. We have joy. We have meaning in life. So we live for the future, not just the present. And how do we know these things? Because God has revealed his purposes to us in his Word.

And as we look at the text today we are going to see that there are two primary purposes that he has with respect to our redemption. A secondary purpose that will result in a primary ultimate purpose. The secondary purpose, as we see here in verse 29, is to conform believers to the image of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this will lead to the ultimate purpose and that is that he might be the first born among many brethren, that his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, might have preeminence in all things.

So the grand goal of history is for God to save sinners in order to glorify his Son and ultimately glorify the triune godhead. And all of history is moving inexorably toward that climax, toward that consummation. This is the grand and glorious plan of redemption and we can see the threads of these truths woven through the tapestry of Scripture.

It is for this reason that the apostle Paul says in verse 28:

“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.”²

And what is his purpose? Well, it is to conform believers to the image of his Son that Christ might be preeminent in his plan of redemption as we are going to go on to understand here this morning.

So, my friends, this is the assurance that we have of our ultimate salvation, an assurance that every believer can enjoy. This is the comfort that is inherent in this passage, that God in his sweet providence intervenes and overrules and orchestrates every variable in the course of history for the present and future good of those who love him, for those who are called according to his purpose.

And the certainty of these purposes really undergirds the dominant theme of Romans chapter eight which is the absolute, unassailable security of the believer.

And now in verses 29 and 30 God is going to reveal exactly how he will accomplish these purposes.

² Romans 8:28.

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Now you must understand that this is a very pastoral section of Paul's epistle. He is concerned about these dear saints at Rome who are beginning to experience an ever increasing level of persecution. And obviously the Spirit of God has inspired him to write these things to bring comfort to all of the saints down through history. His desire is to explain these great doctrinal truths in order to bring to them comfort and consolation as they face the inevitable sorrows of life. In effect what he is saying to them is, "Don't be afraid, dear friends. God is at work to accomplish what he has ordained. And he has decreed that you become conformed to the image of Christ that he might give the Lord Jesus preeminence in all things."

In verse 29 he says, therefore:

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined."³

My what a comfort that is. In fact, in verse 30 he will go on to give the Christian's progression of salvation, that golden chain of eternal security. He says:

"...and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."⁴

My, what a magnificent plan. To think that every phrase of our salvation has been predetermined by an almighty, sovereign God. And, therefore, it cannot fail.

So we can rejoice as believers. We can say, "Lord, thank you, because I know that no matter what happens in my life, it is your purpose for me. You have ordained it. You are superintending every event in my life. You are working all these things together for my good and for your glory. You are going to bring it to pass."

And that is why in verse 31 he will go on to say:

"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"⁵

The answer is obvious. No one, no thing.

Beloved, these stunning truths should stir our hearts to holiness, shouldn't they?

1 John three verse three we read:

"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."⁶

³ Romans 8:29.

⁴ Romans 8:30.

⁵ Romans 8:31.

⁶ 1 John 3:3.

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The reality of God's sovereignty over our salvation should drive our faces absolutely into the dirt with humility and praise. Unfortunately, many times it does quite the opposite. Some will learn of these doctrines and begin to spread their tail feathers of knowledge for everyone to see and strut around like a proud peacock itching for a fight. Although I am in full agreement with John Calvin's five points that so perfectly and accurately summarize God's plan of salvation, the doctrines of grace, I would also say that in my experience there is perhaps nothing more obnoxious than a rabid Calvinist that uses every opportunity to cram his tulip down the poor unsuspecting throat of an Arminian that does not agree with these things. And we certainly don't want to fall into that camp. I am sure that some of you who love the Lord every bit or more than I could would not agree with some of the things that would come forth from this pulpit, especially over the next few weeks as we see Paul building up a head of steam here in chapter eight to come to chapter nine to teach us the doctrine of unconditional, sovereign election, that God chooses some to be saved, but not all, that is choice to elect unto spiritual life is absolutely unrelated to personal merit or human effort. Yet man is still held responsible to believe.

This is an inscrutable mystery to us. It is incompatible in our minds, but not in the mind of God. In fact, we are not to even challenge these truths, but to accept them by faith as Paul will make very clear in Romans chapter nine.

But as we see here in chapter eight, these doctrines—and you simply must understand this—these doctrines were given to us to bring comfort, to give assurance, not to divide, not to produce some kind of hostility, but to produce humility, not to fan the flames of pride. And yet this will often be the case.

In fact, this is precisely what happened when Jesus approached the subject in John chapter six. He was telling the people that it is God the Father who selects and draws and teaches those who will be saved. And in verse 65 of John six we read:

“And [Jesus] was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.’”⁷

And here is the reaction.

“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.”⁸

Well, such has been the response of many, it not most, down through the history of the Church. In fact, there are pastors even in this community and in other places that would

⁷ John 6:65.

⁸ John 6:66.

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call me a heretic because I not only believe these things to be true, but I actually teach them. They will often build straw men that they can easily tear down that would slander me and other men like me around the world that would teach these things. They would say, “Yeah, he believes that God creates some men just so that he can send them to hell, that God just creates men and they are just nothing more than robots that have absolutely no free will, that we don’t even believe in evangelism or missions, because God is going to save who he is going to save anyway.”

Well, none of those things are true. And certainly we do not believe them, but as we approach these matters, I must say that it is my sincere desire to approach them with humility and with kindness for those maybe even in this room who will disagree, certainly many who will hear us on the internet around the world. Nevertheless, you must understand I must and I will preach my conscience because I do not answer to you. I do not answer to you. I answer to the one who has called me to be his spokesman. I am to preach the whole counsel of God. I am to contend earnestly for the faith that was once and for all given to the saints. I am to preach the Word of God when it is popular and when it is not and most of the time I know that it is not very popular, especially these doctrines.

Hebrews 13:17, I am reminded that I am to keep watch over your souls, because I will have to give an account. And James three verse one as a teacher of the Word I have a stricter judgment. So I am extremely careful in my studies and in what I say to you to make sure that I am saying exactly what I believe with all of my heart is the truth of the Word of God. I believe that you cannot be popular and faithful at the same time. You must make a choice. And I have made mine.

So let’s look closely, this amazing revelation of the Christian’s progression in salvation. And we want to do this by first examining God’s purpose in his planned redemption. Where is all of this going? And I wish to approach these verses by drawing your attention to two major themes. Number one, God’s sovereign two fold purpose in redemption. That is what we are going to look at today. And then the next time we are together we will look at, secondly, God’s sovereign, unbroken chain to accomplish his purpose which we will elaborate on the idea of the Christian’s progression in salvation.

So, first of all, what is God’s sovereign, two fold purpose in redemption that the inspired apostle reveals to us? Well, again, first of all, recall in verse 28 that he says:

“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.”⁹

⁹ Romans 8:28.

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And now he is going to elaborate on this. What is this purpose? Well, he begins with the secondary purpose that is going to produce the primary ultimate purpose. And it is for this reason that the secondary purpose is stated first in verse 29. He says:

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.”¹⁰

The word “conformed,” συμμορφος (soom-mor-fos’) in the original language. By the way, we get our English word “morph” from that. It means to transform from one image of a similar form or nature to another in a similar form.

We see this concept illustrated from time to time when we watch a movie or something on television. We see it in modern cinematography where with computer technology they are able to morph a person into something else. So we kind of have an idea of what that looks like.

So Paul is saying here that he has set us apart in order that we might be similar in form to the nature of his Son. That is his purpose for us.

In Philippians chapter three verse 21 the apostle says he will transform the body of our humble state. Transform means to change from one form into another. He will transform the body of our humble state into conformity. And there is that same word again that was used in verse 29, συμμορφος (soom-mor-fos’). It is again, he is going to morph our body into a similar form and nature of Christ. He is going to transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself.

So as we come back to what Paul was saying, he is telling us that God has predestined his people to be conformed to the image of his Son. The term “image,” εικων (i-kone’) in the original language, means a copy or an imprint or a likeness that is fitted into a specific pattern.

We see this term used, for example, in Colossians 1:15 where we read:

“And He [referring to Christ] is the image of the invisible God.”¹¹

Jesus is the perfect image, the exact likeness of God. He is both the representation and manifestation of God. Thus he is God, fully God in every way.

Now, understand that the term image here in Romans eight verse 29 is not a likeness that just happens to resemble something or someone else. But it is one that actually derived

¹⁰ Romans 8:29.

¹¹ Colossians 1:15.

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its form directly from another. So it speaks of a derived likeness. It is one that is derived by God himself. God is the one that does the transforming. God is the one that does the conforming.

So Paul's idea here is that the Christian's predetermined destination is to be fitted into the likeness of Christ and into the pattern of existence of his life that he manifested here on earth and as he is now in the glory of heaven.

You will recall that Scripture tells us that we were created in the image of God. And, obviously, because of Adam's sin that image has been marred. There is corruption. There is distortion. And, sadly, this is the corrupt image that has been imprinted upon every person who has ever been born, the progeny of Adam. And in some inscrutable sense, all me, save Jesus Christ, actually sinned in Adam, not personally, but really as we study the Scripture. And, thus, every person stands guilty and condemned before God. Romans chapter five makes this very clear. And in verse 12 of that text we read how that Adam's sin was imputed to all men because he was our representative and that that resulted in death. And so, likewise, Christ's righteousness is imputed to all men who believe in him. That is the glorious doctrine of justification. And he represents all believers in righteousness resulting in life.

So now in the eternal purposes of God we see that he will imprint the image of the second Adam upon every believer that he has purposed to save.

This is astonishing, absolutely mind boggling. This is God's predetermined purpose for us, to conform us into the image, the likeness of his Son. And, beloved, you just simply must grasp this amazing truth, because herein is the source of your assurance of salvation. This is God's unalterable plan for those that he has chosen to save.

2 Corinthians chapter three verse 18 we read:

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”¹²

So this is a comforting assurance to know that we are part of this purpose. This is why God is working all these things together in our life to recreate us into the image of Christ so that we might dwell with him in perfect righteousness.

Now, to say, as some do, that a believer could lose his salvation, would imply that somehow the promise and the power and the purpose of God can be overruled by the will of man and or the schemes of Satan. And that, of course, would impugn the very character of God, that somehow he is not going to fulfill what he has promised. It would imply that the securing work of the Father cannot be trusted, that his power is insufficient

¹² 2 Corinthians 3:18.

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to accomplish what he has decreed. It would also imply that the securing work of the Son who has appeased the wrath of God, who continues to be our advocate at God's bar of justice, who continues to make intercession for us as our high priest, all of that would imply that somehow those works are deficient and ineffective. To say that you could lose your salvation would also imply that the securing work of the Spirit who has regenerated us, who has given us eternal life and promised to dwell within us, who has sealed us for the day of redemption, guaranteeing our salvation, who has baptized us into union with Christ that all of his supernatural works cannot be trusted, that somehow they can be abrogated, that they have to be rescinded or reversed.

Dear friends, I would submit to you that such thinking simply does not square with the God of the Bible and his purposes.

Now, I wish to draw your attention to some other passages that really speak to this secondary purpose of making us into the likeness of Christ.

Later in Romans chapter nine verse 11 God speaks of or Paul speaks of God's sovereign choice to save some based solely on his uninfluenced will, not because of personal merit or human effort. And we could ask the question which basically this text asks. Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau before they were even born? And the answer is verse 11.

"...in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls."¹³

We see his purpose to conform us into the likeness of Christ in Ephesians chapter one beginning in verse four. There we read that:

"...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."¹⁴

In other words, whatever God purposes, he wills to do.

Verse nine. We go on to learn that:

"He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him."¹⁵

He goes on to say:

¹³ Romans 9:11.

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:4-5.

¹⁵ Ephesians 1:9.

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“...having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”¹⁶

Unless we decide to violate and abrogate his will and impose upon him a will of our own if we so choose.

Obviously the text does not have that addition.

But when did God make his decree of purpose? Well, as the text as we just read tells us it was before the foundation of the world. And upon what basis? According to the kind attention of his will, according of his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will.

But some will argue, “Wait a minute, now. Yes, he chose, but he chose on the basis of his foreknowledge. It says right here in verse 29. So therefore his election is conditional. It was based upon his foreknowledge of who would choose him. Because, after all, in 1 Peter 1:2 it speaks of the, quote, ‘elect according to foreknowledge of God.’ So his choosing, his election is according to foreknowledge.”

Well, that sounds like a reasonable argument. But I would humbly submit to you that there are many problems with that thinking. Such a view, first of all, denies the sovereignty of God in election. It makes him dependent upon the will of man to hopefully one day believe in the future so that he could look down the corridors of time and then decree to save him. That is simply not what Scripture teaches. This is not the God of the Bible.

Furthermore, think about it. Prior to any kind of knowledge, there must be a divine decree, because how could God possibly know anything if he had not first decreed something to happen? Moreover, since Scripture is clear that no man seeks after God, Romans 3:9-18, and that it is God who initiates salvation by granting us the gift of faith, Romans 2:8-9, then how could anyone choose to believe on their own?

So no matter how you cut it, God has to be the source by his choosing of those he predestines to believe.

Furthermore, as we are going to discover when we examine the word “foreknowledge” more closely next week in more detail, there is absolutely no hint in these verses as to exactly what God foreknew. No hint. But we do know how the term is used in other passages of Scripture, the term foreknowledge, προγινωσκω (prog-in-ocē'-ko) in the original language. It means to choose or select in advance of some other event. It means to choose beforehand or to select in advance.

¹⁶ Ephesians 1:11-12.

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For example, in Peter's sermon at Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:23 he spoke of Christ saying, quote:

“...this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross.”¹⁷

Now grammatically the phrase “predetermined plan and foreknowledge” are connected and, thus, they refer to the same thing. So the term “foreknowledge” carries with it the idea of foreordination, the idea of a predetermined plan, not merely the idea of knowing something ahead of time. In fact, the Old Testament Hebrew concept of to know literally means to know intimately, to have a special regard for, to look upon with special concern. That is how the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament translates that Hebrew term.

It is the same word translated “chosen” in Amos chapter three verse two where the Lord says to Israel:

“You only have I chosen [or known] among all the families of the earth.”¹⁸

God predetermined that he would know Israel as the intimate object of his love, making them his chosen people.

So the term foreknowledge not only speaks of foreordination, but also of fore love. So, bottom line, what Paul is telling us here in Romans eight is that God has a predetermined, uninfluenced, special love for those who predestined in eternity past to be conformed to the image of his Son.

You see, that is the point of the whole explanation here. He is trying to comfort the believers. Be comforted, dear Christian, God is causing all these things in your life to work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. So don't ever think that God has abandoned you, that somehow your trials or your suffering are in vain, that he has left you to your own.

Let me tell you why.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Acts 2:23.

¹⁸ Amos 3:2.

¹⁹ Romans 8:29.

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Now I would ask you. What possible consolation would it be to tell them that by foreknowledge, what I am really referring to is that God looked down through the corridors of time into the future to learn what you were going to decide to do and for all of you who will choose him, he then decided to decree to save you.

What comfort would that be? If I was amongst those that heard that, I would say, “Well, wait a minute. You mean my ultimate salvation is left up to me, that I am in charge, not God? I mean, if that is the case, I am doomed. I am doomed. And I thought you said that he is the one that is causing all these things to work together for good to those who love him, to those who are called according to his purpose. So where does my purpose fit in to that? I don't get it.”

Well, obviously that is not the intention of the passage.

Let me give you some other examples of God's predetermined purpose to save sinners that can bring such assurance to us and humble us because of his grace. We see these truths revealed in other passages like 1 Corinthians two verse seven. There Paul says:

“...we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom.”²⁰

Mystery, there, by the way, refers to truths hidden in the past, but now revealed in the New Testament.

“...we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory.”²¹

So he is saying that the truth that God would save and glorify sinners was one that he predestined before the ages to our glory. It is the same term that is used here in Romans 8:29, predestined. Actually the Greek term means to determine or mark out a boundary beforehand.

And when did he do this? Well, he says here in 1 Corinthians 2:7:

“...before the ages.”²²

Literally before time began. That is when he did it. God does not leave his purpose to chance, does he? No. God marks out a boundary before time began that his people would share in his glory. This is the destiny of every Christian. And neither man nor devil can prevent it. Therein is the source of our assurance.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

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2 Timothy 1:9.

“...who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”²³

In other words, in eternity past, before we were even created.

Titus one beginning in verse one.

Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.²⁴

1 Peter one verse 20. Peter speaks of God's plan to redeem sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was foreknown before the foundation of the world, one who was foreordained, fore loved.

In Revelation chapter 13 verse eight we are told that our names have been:

“...written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”²⁵

These are the ones for whom Jesus prayed. You will recall in John 17 in his high priestly prayer, repeatedly he referred to the elect as those whom thou hast given me.

Now how could anyone possibly presume that the undeserved recipients of such grace could frustrate the power and the purpose of God to accomplish what he has predetermined and foreordained before the foundation of the world? This is God's predetermined purpose for the redeemed, to conform his elect unto the likeness of his Son. We are going to be brought into moral conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to perfectly manifest his righteousness in the same measure of the splendor of his glory that he experiences now.

2 Corinthians three verse 18 Paul speaks of the glory of the Lord and says:

“...we... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”²⁶

²³ 2 Timothy 1:9.

²⁴ Titus 1:1-2.

²⁵ Revelation 13:8.

²⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

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My friend, there is God's sovereign purpose for you.

1 John 3:2 we have this promise.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”²⁷

Again, there is the promise. We will be able to gaze upon his glory. And, frankly, we would not be able to do so unless we were transformed and conformed and made into his likeness.

In Hebrews chapter two verses nine through 11 an amazing text where we read of how Christ Jesus was the perfect example for us through his obedience, through his suffering and has therefore become the great pioneer, the great leader of redemption, the one who blazed the trail through his death and resurrection that we might share in his righteousness.

In that text we read:

But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren...²⁸

So, again, it is God. It is not man that is bringing many sons to glory. There is the purpose. And what glory awaits us?

In 1 Corinthians 15:49 we read:

“And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”²⁹

²⁷ 1 John 3:2.

²⁸ Hebrews 2:9-11.

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:49.

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Think about it. He is saying there that the uniqueness of our personhood, of our personalities, the distinctive looks that define each of us as individuals in this life will somehow be maintained in eternity. And, frankly, that will be the case for the saved as well as the damned. This is God's purpose.

In ways that we cannot fully fathom, our bodies are going to be like his. Again, Philippians 3:21.

“[He] will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”³⁰

Again, herein is the great assurance that God by his sovereign, uninfluenced choice has predestined those that he foreordained and fore loved to become conformed to the image of his Son, so that we can enjoy the glory that Christ presently enjoys. That is God's purpose. Take it to the bank.

But that is the secondary purpose that produces the primary purpose. The primary ultimate purpose found at the latter part of verse 29 is that he, referring to Jesus, might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren which means he is the privileged Son like the first born male in a Jewish family that would enjoy the position of being the most important of the children that would follow, the heir of the father, the son of special honor and privilege. The preeminent son is the idea here. It speaks both of his being first in time and in rank.

In Colossians one verse 15 we read that:

“He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”³¹

And in verse 18.

“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”³²

Do you see, friends, this is God the Father's ultimate purpose in redemption? That his beloved Son, our Savior and Lord might be the preeminent one. He is the one who holds the highest position of sovereignty. He is the one who is set apart to the service of God being preeminent. He is the one that is entitled to the inheritance. He is also the first born of many others that will follow as you think about it.

³⁰ Philippians 3:21.

³¹ Colossians 1:15.

³² Colossians 1:18.

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As children of our heavenly Father we look to Jesus as the preeminent one, as the supreme one. And we rejoice knowing that we are the adopted children of the Father. An amazing thought. Christ is the first born by nature. And we, being part of the many brethren are sons by adoption. Christ was the only begotten of the Father, but we were men that were dead in our sins, redeemed by his blood, transformed into his likeness. He is the firstborn from the dead, Scripture tells us. And we are those who will one day sleep in Jesus and in due time we will be raised with him. And as the first born he is now crowned with glory and honor and we as part of the many brethren have been hidden in him and we know that when he shall appear we will be like him. We will see him as he is. This is amazing.

God has predestined us to be conformed into the likeness of his Son so that we can bear the family resemblance perfectly and even share the glory of the Son.

But more importantly, that we might fall on our faces before him in adoration and praise, worshipping forever.

Philippians two verse nine.

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth...³³

Likewise, the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews chapter one verse six.

“And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, ‘AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.’”³⁴

John also speaks of this in Revelation chapter one verse five, this praise that will come to the Son. There we read:

...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.³⁵

³³ Philippians 2:9-10.

³⁴ Hebrews 1:6.

³⁵ Revelation 1:5-7.

The Christian's Progression – Part 1

By David Harrell

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Beloved, this is God's ultimate purpose in his plan of redemption, to glorify his Son. And we should be humbled by the reality that our salvation is merely a means to that end. We shouldn't see ourselves as the center of the universe here, all right? Our salvation, frankly, is secondary to God's overall plan to bring glory to the Son, to bring glory to the triune godhead. And he decreed all of this to happen before the foundations of the earth.

Talk about eternal security. This, again, is the great theme of chapter eight, the assurance of the believer. You see, folks, we have got to read this in context. Think about this. All of this is based upon the initial assertion in verse one of Romans eight.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”³⁶

And then it is as if Paul is going on to say, “Now, let me go on to explain the implications of this staggering reality.”

He has given us the Spirit of God to dwell within us, verse nine. The Spirit is the one who helps us put to death the deeds of the flesh, verse 13. And because of the Spirit we have, verse 15, received the spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out “Abba, Father.” And as God's adopted children, we are heirs of God himself, verse 17, joint heirs with Christ. And for this reason, according to verse 18, the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Yes, indeed, in this life we groan. We are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body, verse 24. But we do so in hope, a persevering hope, verses 24 and 25. In fact, in the midst of all of this the Spirit of God who dwells within us intercedes for us in prayer, because we don't even know how to pray as we need to.

But I want you to be assured, dear Christian, that because of all of these things, God is working a plan. He is causing all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”³⁷

Dear Christian, the very state of grace that you experience right now in the core of your being is because of God's eternal purpose on your behalf. For it is he who has predetermined to save you. He is the one that decreed it, that is supervising it, that is orchestrating all of these things to the praise of his glory. And regardless of any circumstance that comes into your life, you must know according to Scripture that God has ordained it. He has permitted it. Regardless of what power you may experience, know this, that his eternal purposes cannot be thwarted. His power cannot be defeated.

³⁶ Romans 8:1.

³⁷ Romans 8:29.

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Again, if God is for us who is against us? That is Paul's whole argument.

To put it differently, who can stay the omnipotent hand of the Lord of hosts, of the most high God? I ask you. Who could possibly disannul what God has decreed? The God of the Bible is the one who when he bears his mighty arm causes Pharaohs to tremble. He is the one that causes seas and rivers to part. He is the one that causes mountains to collapse and empires to collapse. He is the one that causes storms to be silenced. He is the one that causes demons to shriek in absolute horror. And when wicked men one day beg mountains and rocks to fall on them, know full well, it is because of the mighty arm of an almighty God who is bringing judgment.

Now I ask you. Do you really think that somehow you can thwart his almighty sovereign purposes?

Dear Christian, make no mistake. There is nothing Paul will tell us that can separate us from the love of God. There is nothing. So in all of these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.

My challenge to you this week is to think often on these great truths. Rehearse them in your mind. Apply them to the situations of your life. Teach them to your children. And for you who refuse him, who reject so great a salvation, I must warn you that he is not causing all things to work for your good, but for your doom, unless you repent and unless you believe.

So I would plead with you as a minister of the gospel. Won't you repent this day? Place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your only hope of salvation. And flee from the wrath that abides upon you.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you for these amazing truths that bring such joy and such humility to our hearts. And, Lord, thank you that because of your sovereign purposes we can relax knowing that our faith is secured forever in your great sovereign plan and the very character of the God who has ordained that we be conformed to the image of your Son to the praise of his glory. Lord, melt the hearts of those who do not now you that today would be the day that they bow before the cross and cry out to a mercy for a mercy that they do not deserve. Be pleased to save them, we beg you in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

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