

The Christian's Progression - Part 2

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:29-30

Preached on: Sunday, February 19, 2012

We return again this morning to Paul's epistle to the Romans. You will take your Bibles and turn there. We find ourselves now in verses 29 through 30 in Romans chapter eight. Romans chapter eight verses 29 through 30. And may I remind you, before we look more closely at this text, that Paul is here expanding upon that magnificent doctrine of justification, that glorious truth that would help us understand that because of God's grace, he has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ. And now he is going to detail more of the implications of this imputed righteousness as he talks about the assurance of our salvation. He has made it clear 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.”¹

And what is that purpose? What is, shall we say, the goal of the Christian life? Well, it is two fold as you will recall from last week. The secondary purpose is presented first and that is to conform believers into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the primary purpose is that he might be the first born among many brethren. In other words, that the Lord Jesus would become the preeminent one in all things.

And with this you can begin to sense Paul's pastoral concern for the saints there in Rome and ultimately the Spirit of God's concern for all of us down through the ages who are part of the church. Certainly those early saints found themselves experiencing mounting persecution. They were struggling with indwelling sin as we all do. And at times, I am sure, they would begin to doubt God, to wonder if perhaps he has abandoned them. Perhaps at some time in your life you have experienced that. Maybe you are experiencing that today.

But for some it would lead even to a sense of losing their salvation as if that were really a possibility. But Paul is, in effect, saying here that since God's ultimate purpose is to glorify his Son and since you are a part of that ultimate purpose and you being conformed into the image of his Son, on that basis your salvation cannot fail. This is God's purpose, not yours.

And then to reinforce the grounds of our assurance even more, the Holy Spirit is now going to reveal to us a five step process that explains how God's plan is actually executed in order to fulfill his purpose. And that is what we have here in verses 29 and 30. Let me read them to you.

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;

¹ Romans 8:28.

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and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.²

So, as you can see here, our sovereign God has left nothing to chance. He has left nothing to chance. He has deliberately, logically ordered this progression. And I would like to break it down for you into two pairs with a connecting link, very simple. The first pair is that is depicted with the verbs foreknew and predestined. This speaks of what God has determined for us. And the term called speaks of how God applies what he has determined for us and that is the connecting link to the second pair, justified and glorified, which speaks of what God does to us.

Another way of understanding in this is that foreknowledge, predestination and calling all speak of God's preparation for the work of salvation. Our salvation is based upon the perfect character and the eternal plan of God. This is why we trust in Christ. This is why we believe the gospel, because of foreknowledge, predestination and calling. And then justification and glorification speak of God's provision in salvation, what we receive in salvation. Justification is the immediate effect upon those who submit to this divine plan and glorification is the ultimate effect that we experience.

So last week in part one of this little series, we examined God's sovereign two fold purpose in redemption and now today we are going to look at God's sovereign unbroken chain to accomplish his purposes.

Now, before we look at it more closely, I must share my heart with you. I find this to be an absolutely astonishing, marvelous thing to realize that God in his transcendent glory would give us access into a tiny part of his infinite, omniscient mind and let us in on his purpose and his plan. It is staggering to think that he would do that. And not only does this bring to us great comfort because it brings a clearer understanding of the assurance that we have of our faith, but it also produces humility. In fact, I find myself in the vault of my study being astonished when I read these realities and I often would find myself gazing into space with tear filled eyes just overwhelmed with it all, that he would not only show me these things and show you these things, but beyond that to think what he has actually done for us. I deserve the wrath of God, the wrath of his justice, but instead I have received his love and his grace. This is precisely the purpose of this pastoral section of inspired truth.

So may I ask you all to join me and get lost in the wonder of it all yet again and fall on our faces in humble adoration and praise because of what God has done.

Now as we look closely at these five steps, bear in mind that each are individual links in a chain. In fact, many times this is called the golden chain of our security or of our salvation.

² Romans 8:29-30.

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But I want you to bear in mind three things just by way of introduction. Each step, first of all, is sequential. You must understand that. Each one is dependent upon the divine action preceding it and it begins with foreknowledge. And for this reason the phrase “He also...” is repeated before each step after “whom he foreknew.”

But, secondly, each step is interrelated. The idea here is you can't have one without all the others. Together they form a unified whole. Every man, therefore, that God has foreknown, will be predestined, will be called, will be justified, will be glorified.

And then, thirdly, each step is simultaneous in the mind of God. You see, God is not bound to time as we are. He sees the entire process all at one time. And it is for this reason that if you will notice closely, each verb is in the aorist tense, or the past tense as if it has already happened.

It is an amazing thing. So what God is saying here is, “What I have decreed for you in eternity past, is so certain to be accomplished in eternity future, that I can speak of it and express every step of it as if it has already occurred.”

The great minister of Westminster Chapel in London, Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this, quote, “Every part of this purpose of God has been worked out in detail. There is nothing contingent about what God does. He saw it all. He planned it all in the beginning and there is a sense in which he did it all before the foundation of the world. There is no uncertainty whatsoever with respect to it. Every single step is planned and ordained and will be accomplished,” end quote.

So this golden chain of eternal security, this unfolding of God's plan of salvation is what Paul is now using to provide, shall we say, a Gibraltar of assurance for the saints to reinforce even more the hope that we have that all of the promises that God has given us with respect to our eternal glory will, indeed, come to fruition.

Now I would also add as a footnote, it is not the apostle's intention here to offer a complete overview of the doctrine of salvation. There are a number of other components detailed in other passages beyond these five. But, instead, Paul's purpose here is to expand upon his preceding discussion concerning the Christian's assurance. Again, that is the theme of chapter eight. And he is going to do this by offering a general overview of five key components in God's saving plan. So let's look at them more closely.

The first one and the first pair, number one, is foreknowledge. Notice verse 29.

“For whom He foreknew...”³

This one is first because it is most important. This is the fountainhead from which all of the others will flow. It is that work of God whereby he prepares sinners for salvation.

³ Romans 8:29.

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And he does this on the basis of his perfect character and his eternal plan. The term foreknowledge, προγινωσκω (prog-in-ocē'-ko) in the original language, προ (pro) means before and γινωσκω (ghin-ocē'-ko) means know and sometimes in Scripture it means to know ahead of time.

For example, in Acts 26:5 Paul says that the Jews, quote, "Knew before now." There is the term. They knew before now for a long time if they wish to testify and so forth.

Now since this is the common meaning of the term, it is understandable why so many people would apply this meaning to verse 29. Many would say that man's response to the gospel is the object of God's foreknowledge, that God in his omniscience looked down the corridors of time and he saw those who would choose Christ and, thus, foreknowledge became the basis for predestination. That is the idea that many theologians would call conditional election.

So, to put it real simply, God chose you because you first chose him. If I can put it even more simply, you got yourself chosen. That is the idea. So his decision to predestine you to eternal life was conditioned upon his foreknowledge that you would choose Christ.

Now, I would humbly submit that not only is this position awkward and highly contrived, but such a view is highly improbable for several reasons. First of all, if that were true, all of that would be terribly confusing to these dear saints who have just been told in this very epistle in chapter three verses nine through 18 that no man seeks after God. They have been told in Romans five verse 10 that man is at enmity with God. He is his enemy. And in chapter eight verse seven they have been told that the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so. We are also told in Ephesians two verse one that man is spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins. He is a spiritual cadaver. How in the world is he going to respond in repentant faith. 1 Corinthians 2:14, a natural man, in other words, the unsaved man, does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. So they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritual appraised which literally means they have no capacity to grasp spiritual truth, to discern it and apply it to their heart. At 2 Corinthians four verse four we are told that the god of this world, small g, referring to Satan, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

So I would ask you if our salvation is based upon God knowing ahead of time of who would believe, how could we possibly respond to truth with saving faith given all of the passages that say we are utterly unable to do so? Big problem. Given our rebellion where does our faith come from.

Well, the answer ultimately is that it comes from God, not from you as we will see.

A second reason why the position of conditional election is untenable is that Scripture teaches that it is God, not man who initiates salvation. In John six verse 37 Jesus says:

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“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.”⁴

And in verse 44:

“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”⁵

Verse 65.

“...no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”⁶

And Luke tells us in Acts chapter 13 verse 48 that only those who have been appointed to eternal life will believe. We are even told in Ephesians 2:8-9 that our faith which is essential to salvation is a gift from God. That is reiterated as well in 2 Peter 1:1 and Philippians 1:29 and Acts 3:16. In fact, we are told in John 1:13 that our new birth through the blood of Christ does not come from, quote:

“...the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁷

And, of course, this is consistent with Paul's words here in verses 29 and 30. He is revealing the will of God in salvation. He is describing God's plan, God's purpose. This is from God's perspective.

So to interject the idea that salvation is initiated by man rather than God would not only be unbiblical, but in my humble opinion it is very contrived.

A third reason why this concept of conditional election is flawed is that the verb “to foreknow” is also used in the New Testament to portray the ideas of foreordination and fore love, concepts that far exceed this notion that God merely foresees the faith of every believer, which he obviously does. He foresees everything. But it means to foreordain and fore love and that fits perfectly into the context of pastoral encouragement, of God's marvelous workings on our behalf to accomplish his purposes.

So, beloved, to foreknow is to foreordain. It is to fore love. Let me give you some examples. Paul employs the same term in Romans chapter 11 verse two. There we read:

“God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.”⁸

⁴ John 6:37.

⁵ John 6:44.

⁶ John 6:65.

⁷ John 1:13.

⁸ Romans 11:2.

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Obviously this speaks of predetermined choice, a predetermined choice to set his love on Israel and establish an intimate relationship with them.

In 1 Peter one verses one and two Peter employs this idea of foreordination when he described believers as those, quote:

“... who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”⁹

Now to say that God simply knew before hand that they would come to faith would seem very unnatural there. Peter is talking about the basis of their election, the cause, the motivating force, namely divine foreordination.

Another example in verse 20 of that same passage. He used the same word foreknowledge in the sense of foreordination when he declared that Christ, quote”

“...was foreknown before the foundation of the world.”¹⁰

Now obviously this has to mean more than God knew who Christ was ahead of time. So in each case whether in reference to Israel or believers or Christ, the term foreknowledge means much more than merely knowing ahead of time. It speaks of an action by which God has chosen or appointed either Israel or believers or Christ to a special status and or an intimate relationship with himself.

Let me give you another example in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost according to 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.”¹¹

Now, obviously, Peter is not saying that God merely knew ahead of time about the crucifixion, but father he foreordained it.

Those of you who understand Greek grammar will also understand that the phrase “predetermined plan and foreknowledge” are connected and, thus, they refer to the same thing. So Peter equates God’s predetermined plan or foreordination with his foreknowledge. They go together.

So, again, the term foreknowledge carries with it the idea of foreordination, a predetermined plan, not merely the idea of just knowing something ahead of time.

But I would also submit to you that it speaks of fore love. In fact, the Old Testament

⁹ 1 Peter 1:1-2.

¹⁰ 1 Peter 1:20.

¹¹ Acts 2:23.

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Hebrew concept of, quote, “to know” that verb literally has the idea of to know intimately, to have a special regard for, to look upon with special concern. And this is how the Septuagint translates that Hebrew term. For example in Genesis 4:17 we read:

“And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived.”¹²

And the phrase “had relations with” employs the Hebrew verb for knowing. Cain knew his wife.

In Genesis 18:19 we read, “For I have known him,” referring to Abraham or literally I have chosen him is the idea.

Jeremiah one verse five.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”¹³

Again, the idea of I consecrated you. I appointed you. I loved you. It is the same word translated “chosen” in Amos chapter three and verse two. And there the Lord speaks to Israel and he says:

“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth.”¹⁴

Now obviously he is not saying, “I don’t know anybody else, but just you.” He is saying, “I have set my intimate love upon you.”

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

In Matthew chapter one verse 25 he describes Joseph’s relationship with Mary by saying that he, quote:

“...kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son.”¹⁵

And the phrase “kept her a virgin” translates a Greek phrase meaning literally he did not know her. So, again, the term carries with it more than the idea of mere knowledge, but that of to know intimately.

In Matthew chapter seven verse 23 Jesus reveals his attitude toward false disciples at the last judgment and he says, quote:

¹² Genesis 4:17.

¹³ Jeremiah 1:5.

¹⁴ Amos 3:2.

¹⁵ Matthew 1:25.

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“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”¹⁶

Now clearly Jesus is speaking of something far greater than an intellectual awareness of who these people are. He was speaking of an intimate awareness of the motives of their heart, of their self deception, their dead faith that led them to their eternal condemnation.

So when Paul addresses those who are called according to his purpose in verse 28 and says:

“For whom he foreknew...”¹⁷

He is speaking of those who he foreordained, those whom he fore loved and, thus, predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son.

And, beloved, herein is the consolation that is inherent in this whole passage, the assurance of the believer. Be comforted, dear Christian, he is saying. God is causing all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose, because he has set his love upon you in eternity past. He has foreordained that you be predestined to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. His foreknowledge is a dynamic decree of divine love for you. Because of his uninfluenced fore love, he foreordained you to conformity with the image of his Son.

Now, notice the second verb in the first pair in verse 28.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined...”¹⁸

Predestination is different from foreknowledge, but it follows it sequentially. It flows sequentially from foreknowledge. Again, foreknowledge speaks of the special love that God lavished upon his elect. But predestination explains what God intends to do with his elect whom he fore loved, the purpose of his elective grace.

The Greek term is προορίζω (pro-or-id'-zo). ορίζω (hor-id'-zo) literally means to appoint or to determine. We get our English word “horizon” from that. And we all know what a horizon is. It is the place where the earth meets the sky, that line that determines a boundary or a limit to what we can see from a certain vantage point. And pro means pre. So the idea here is predetermined or preappoint or predestined. So the term means to mark out or to appoint or to determine beforehand.

In Acts chapter four verse 28 Peter spoke of God in his prayer of the enemies of Jesus as being those that he has appointed:

¹⁶ Matthew 7:23.

¹⁷ Romans 8:29.

¹⁸ Ibid.

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“...to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.”¹⁹

In 1 Corinthians two verse seven:

“God predestined before the ages to our glory.”²⁰

That the hidden wisdom in the past would be revealed to us in the New Testament, that wisdom with respect to God's saving grace to glorify sinners and so forth.

So likewise what we must understand is that God has predestined the salvation of all those whom he fore loved and elected by his uninfluenced sovereign grace. God does not leave his purposes to chance. God has marked out a boundary beforehand, a limit here that his people would share in his glory.

In Ephesians one beginning in verse four we read:

“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.”²¹

Not based on him seeing what we were going to do in eternity, or in the future. So whatever God purposes to do, he wills to do.

Verse nine.

“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.”²²

He goes on to say:

“...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.”²³

And then also in verse 11.

“...we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”²⁴

¹⁹ Acts 4:28.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:7.

²¹ Ephesians 1:4-5.

²² Ephesians 1:9.

²³ Ephesians 1:11-12.

²⁴ Ephesians 1:11.

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So I would submit to you according to verse 29 in Romans eight he says:

“He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”²⁵

So this is what God has determined for us.

Now, how does God apply what he has determined for us? Well, this takes us to the connecting link between the first pair and the second pair. And that is found in the term “called.” And this speaks of the Holy Spirit’s inward call upon the heart of all those that God has fore loved and fore ordained. This you might say is where God’s plan intersects with our life, how he connects what he has determined for us with what he is going to do to us.

Now bear in mind, as we have studied before, there is a general universal call that we read about in Scripture and there is also a special or effectual call. That general universal call is an outward call of the gospel. It goes forth to all people. It is that work of God by which he invites all men to Christ.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”²⁶

But there is also that special, effectual inward call, that calling of God which without faith results in men responding in faith and accepting God’s offer of salvation. It is sometimes called irresistible grace. This is the call that is used here in Romans 8:28-30.

We read it, as well, in Ephesians 1:18 where Paul says:

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling.”²⁷

2 Timothy 1:9 Paul speaks of the Lord:

“...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.”²⁸

²⁵ Romans 8:29.

²⁶ Matthew 11:28.

²⁷ Ephesians 1:18.

²⁸ 2 Timothy 1:9.

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So this special effectual call of God is one that is ultimately known by its results. And it is for this reason it is often known as the efficacious call, because it effectively accomplishes its purpose of bringing men to salvation.

May I remind you of the passage in 2 Thessalonians chapter two verses 13 through 14. There Paul assures the believers in Thessalonica that:

“God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁹

So the Holy Spirit inwardly operates in the heart and he effectively operates upon man's will so that we will freely and voluntarily choose to come to Christ for salvation.

Now some will ask, and rightfully so, “Well, ok, wait a minute. If God has set all of this into motion and he has sovereignly ordained all of these things to come to pass, why should we pray? Why should we preach? Why should we evangelize?”

Well, the answer is quite simple, because we are commanded to do so. That is what Jesus did. And you must understand that God uses us as his instruments of righteousness to call those that he has predestined to save. He uses us to accomplish his eternal purposes.

You must understand that God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are not mutually exclusive to God. They seem to be so to us. It is an inscrutable mystery to us. Our minds can't fully fathom these things. We don't have the mind of God, but they are perfectly compatible in the mind of God. They are only incompatible to theologians who value man's free will more than God's will and who bristle at the idea that somehow God would have the right to choose which, if any, hell deserving sinners he would save. It just doesn't seem fair that he would get to do that for some.

But, dear Christian, you must understand. We are responsible of the outward call.

Romans 10:14.

“And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?”³⁰

Verse 17:

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”³¹

²⁹ 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

³⁰ Romans 10:14.

³¹ Romans 10:17.

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You see, that is our work. We spread the seeds of the gospel. But it is the work of the Holy Spirit to cause a man to respond in faith to the inward call.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter one verse five we read:

“...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”³²

That is the work of the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians one verse 18:

“For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”³³

So this is the work of the Holy Spirit that causes a man to be born again. This is the great doctrine of regeneration. Jesus said in John 3:8 we are born of the Spirit.

Beloved, the only possible way our evangelistic efforts ever bear any fruit is because sovereign grace was working on that heart long before we got there. You must understand that without sovereign grace there is not enough manipulative, tear jerking, altar call stories in the world to get a man to be saved. There are not enough verses in *Just as I am* to get a man to be saved. You can pass out all of the tracts and have all of the revivals you want. You can do that until it hairlips every cow in Texas and a man will not be saved unless God has been at work. That is the glory of sovereign grace. What a comforting truth that is to know that when I preach the gospel, even though the vast majority of people will reject it, there are those who will hear it and because of sovereign grace they will be saved. If I didn't have that hope, I think I would kill myself.

I have heard this stuff before. Well, their blood is going to be on your hands if you don't give them the gospel. Well, I am all of giving them the gospel. But are you kidding me? It is not me that can get them saved.

What a hideous thought. Besides, for those that would believe that, I thought they already got saved and, therefore, they had been predestined based on that foreknowledge. So, see, none of that makes any sense.

What a motivating reality to know that when we preach the gospel, God has already been at work. And, beloved, his work will not fail.

³² 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

³³ 1 Corinthians 1:18.

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So foreknowledge, predestination and calling all speak of God's preparation for the work of salvation, a work that is based upon the perfect holy character and eternal plan of a sovereign God. This is why we believe the gospel.

Now critics will scream, "Foul, foul. Wait a minute. If God chooses believers for salvation, that means that he also chooses unbelievers for condemnation."

Well, this is certainly a logical corollary to our finite minds. But that is not the mind of God. That is not what he teaches in his Word. What we learn in his Word is that unbelievers are condemned in the basis of their unbelief, not on the basis of God's foreknowledge, his foreordination, his fore love or predestination. Such a concept is not to be found in Scripture. Indeed, as we read in John three verse 18:

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."³⁴

I must confess. I take great umbrage with those who would make the charge that anyone who believes these glorious truths that are so clearly taught in Scripture that can be defended so compellingly exegetically, to say that those who believe these things are heretics because they make God out to be a monster, is something that I think is grossly unfair and unkind.

Peter states unequivocally that God does not wish for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9. That is the heart of God.

In a similar statement Paul declares in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 that:

"God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."³⁵

So the question is: Well, why doesn't he do that then? If that is his desire, why doesn't he do that? You are saying that he chooses some, but not all. Why does he do that? Well, the answer is because God has not decreed all that he desires.

You see, there is a distinction between God's revealed will which is his moral will, his commands and his prohibitions that we read in Scripture and his secret will, his will of decree, his sovereign will which refers to his sovereign all encompassing divine purpose according to which he foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.

Sometimes as we look at Scripture we see that God has decreed what he has forbidden. God is often pleased to ordain his own displeasure.

³⁴ John 3:18.

³⁵ 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

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For example, in Exodus four God commands Pharaoh to let his people go. That is his revealed will. And yet we also read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he wouldn't let the people go. Therein is his secret will of decree. God willed his own displeasure when in his secret will in Acts 2:23 he foreordained his Son to be delivered up. It was his secret will that Judas and Pilate and Herod and the Roman soldiers and the Jewish mob would violate his revealed will communicated in his moral law by their willful sin of crucifying Jesus. So, too, in salvation sometimes he ordains his own displeasure. God's revealed will is that all people without any exception be saved. This is what he desires that should happen. Yet, for reasons he doesn't explain to us, he has sovereignly, secretly decreed that only some will be the recipients of his grace and that is what he decrees will happen.

But some will ask, "Well, why didn't God desire and therefore decree to save all men? Why?"

Well, we don't know completely, but I think we can answer that by saying it is because God wanted something even greater than the salvation of all men which he could have easily done.

Well, what is it that he wanted even greater than that? Well, the Arminian view would be to preserve the free will of man. That is what he wanted more greater. He could have saved everyone, but God so valued the dignity of libertarian freedom that he only decreed to save those whom he saw in his foreknowledge who believed. That would be one position that some of our dear brothers would hold. The other position, sometimes called the Calvinistic position would be that what God wanted greater than saving all men was to display the full range of his glorious attributes for his own delight and for those with whom he chose to share his glory. By not saving all he gave opportunity to demonstrate his infinite justice, the glory found in his wrath and in his mercy.

So God deems his own glory more important than saving everyone, certainly more important than preserving the free will of man.

So with that, we return to the golden chain of salvation. And I might add that I will speak, more on this when we come to chapter nine where Paul deals with it in greater detail.

But as we come back to this golden chain of salvation that is anchored in the very character and purposes of God, again, who foreordained and fore loved some, but not all, perhaps because he deemed the full display of his glory more important than that. As we come back to this we are reminded again that indeed he has told us that he desires all men to be saved, but he has decreed his own displeasure by saving some and not all.

But, my friends, nowhere, nowhere does Scripture teach that God predestines unbelievers to eternal condemnation. Their judgment is always because of their unbelief.

So we conclude this golden chain verse 29:

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“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined.”³⁶

Verse 30.

“...and whom He predestined, these He also called.”³⁷

Again, that inward work of the Holy Spirit whereby he operates upon the heart and upon the human will to cause us to freely, to voluntarily choose to come to Christ for salvation. And then that verb “calls” links the first pair of what God has determined for us with the second pair of what God does to us and we have talked about these at great length before, so I will not elaborate upon them much, but he says:

“...and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”³⁸

Justification is that glorious act by God whereby he declares us to be righteous based upon the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and, of course, glorification speaks of all of the wonderful promises that God has given to the redeemed. It speaks of our unveiling as the sons of God, the redemption of our body and on and on it goes.

Dear friends, this is God’s sovereign, unbroken chain to accomplish his purpose. So you must understand. Our salvation is all a work of God from beginning to end. And we could no more lose our salvation than we could earn it. And it is for this reason why Paul will go on in verse 31 and say:

“What then shall we say to these things?”³⁹

I am sure that when he wrote this his eyes were filled with tears.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”⁴⁰

And verse 33.

“Who will bring a charge against God’s elect?”⁴¹

He is going to go on to say that there is nothing that could separate us from the love of God. It is all part of his plan, all a part of his purpose, because he is the one that is in charge of your salvation from start to finish.

³⁶ Romans 8:29.

³⁷ Romans 8:30.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Romans 8:31.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Romans 8:33.

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I found myself as I meditated upon these things singing that great hymn that that blind hymnist wrote, Fanny Crosby. She could see it. I hope you can see it. Sing it with me.

[singing]

Stand together with me.

[singing]

Father, indeed, we praise you because of that blessed assurance that we have because we know that we have been made a part of your purposes that you have ordained before the foundations of the world. And because of this we can relax knowing that everything in our life, even our own sin, even our own stupidity will be those things that you will work together to ultimately conform us into the image of your glorious Son that he might have the preeminence in all things. Lord, I pray that you will anchor these truths in our hearts, that we will live consistently with them, with the hope that is ours because of you. And, Lord, for those who do not know you as Savior, oh God, they are some of our children. They are some of our family members. They are some of our precious friends. Oh Lord, be pleased to use us as instruments of righteousness that we might present the gospel to them in all of its power that they might be saved. Lord, we thank you and we praise you and we long to see you. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

And all of God's people said Amen.

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