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Finding Rest in God Alone (Part 2) Romans 8:29-30

Introduction:

I **received** Jesus Christ as my **Savior** and **Lord** when I was **young**, but for **many years** I struggled off and on with the **fear** of **losing** my salvation. Those times were **very distressing** and **painful** for me. I can remember feeling **deeply grieved** over the **reality** of **sin** in my life and because at times I couldn't seem to **deal with it** or didn't **want** to, I didn't have the **subjective assurance** of my salvation that the Holy Spirit wanted to give me. And since during those years I often let **my feelings** control me instead of the **Word of God**, I forfeited the **objective security** of my salvation that God's truth could bring.

There are **many passages** in Scripture that teach those who are **genuinely saved** are **eternally saved** and **never** in danger of **losing** their salvation. But **Romans 8:29-30** is perhaps the **clearest** and **most explicit** presentation of this truth in all of God's Word. This is what we are going to be looking at this morning as we continue on in our study of **Romans 8**. Turn there with me in your Bible.

In **Romans 8:29-30** we see ***five unbreakable links*** in God's chain of salvation that should give all of us as believers the **certainty** that we are **eternally secure** in Jesus Christ.

The ***first unbreakable link*** is this:

I. God's Foreknowledge of believers' Salvation

- A. Look at **v. 29**: **For** those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become **conformed** to the image of His Son, so that **He** would be the **firstborn** among **many brethren**.
1. Having shown in **v. 28** that by God's sovereign providence and unstoppable purpose He **orchestrates everything** in our lives as believers' to **work together** for our **good**, the word "**for**" (**gar**) in **v. 29** shows that Paul now sets out to **explain** and **support** what he has just said.
 2. He does this by giving in **vv. 29-30** some **sample milestones** in God's order of salvation. In these **two verses** Paul uses **five key words** as "**links in a metal chain**" to create what theologians have called God's "**Golden Chain of Salvation**."
 3. These **links** are both **logical** and **chronological**. Each link is "**logical**," in that, each is connected and dependent on the preceding link(s), and then becomes the **basis** for the next link. Thus **binding** these **five links** together in an **unbreakable chain**.
 4. And each link is "**chronological**," in that, together they give the **sequence** of God's work of sovereign grace in the salvation of the believer.
 5. Paul traces this **unbreakable** "golden chain of salvation" from its beginning in **eternity past**; its coming into **present time, space, and history**; and its ending in **eternity future**. And at every point the One who **accomplishes** each of these **five great acts** is **God Himself**, for it is "**He**" alone who **foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified**.

6. We have already seen in our earlier studies of Romans that Paul does not **deny** or **minimize** the importance of the **human responsibility of faith**, but his **primary emphasis** now is on **God's sovereignty in salvation**. Since the **overall theme** of **8:28-39** is **security**, if any of our **eternal security** depended on **us** it would be **tentative** at best.

B. Notice again that the **first link** is **God's foreknowledge of believers' salvation**. Paul says, "For **those whom** He **foreknew...**"

1. Now of all the links in God's chain of salvation this **first link** is the **most controversial**. I know that there are **good** Christians who deeply **love** God and His Word on **both sides** of this issue so I want to **sensitively** say what I believe the **Scripture says** knowing that we as believers can **agree to disagree** in an **agreeable** way.
2. Some believe that the word "**foreknew**" (proegno) or **foreknowledge** here means that since God is **omniscient** or **all-knowing**, He looked down through the corridor of time and **knew in advance** those who were going to **believe** in Him. And on the **basis** of **knowing** their **faith**, He then predestined, called, justified, and glorified them.
3. Now this view is **very attractive** in that it doesn't give the impression that God **saves some** and **not others**. But I don't believe this is what the **text says** for at least **four reasons**:
4. **First**, in the **seven** occurrences of the word "**foreknow**" in the New Testament, only **two** mean "**to know beforehand**," and in

both cases the word refers to **man's foreknowing** (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17).

5. However, the **other five** occurrences refer to **God's foreknowing** (Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2, 20). In each of these **salvation contexts** the word "**foreknow**" means to pre-appoint, pre-determine, and foreordain.
6. For example, in **1 Peter 1:20** we read, "For He was **foreknown** before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you." God the Father didn't merely **know beforehand** that Christ was going to be the Savior of the world, but He **pre-determined** Him to be.
7. **Second**, although it is **true** that the omniscient God knows **everything** about **everyone** (Isa. 46:10), notice that the **recipients** of His saving work are called here "**those whom**" and "**these whom**," which refers back to the **believers in v. 28** who are "those who love God," "those who are called." This shows that **God's foreknowing** was not certain facts **about** people (e.g. their faith) but rather the **people themselves**, whom He then predestined, called, justified, and glorified.
7. **Douglas Moo** is correct when he states, "Paul does not say that **God knew** anything **about us** but that he **knew us**, and this is **reminiscent** of the Old Testament sense of "**know**." (pg. 532-33).
8. In both the Old and New Testaments when we are told that God "**knew**" people it always refers to those whom He **set** His affection and favor upon, loved intimately, and had **chosen** for Himself. **For example:** God said about **Abraham** in **Genesis**

18:19, “For I have **chosen** him...” The word “**chosen**” (yada) here is the Hebrew word “**know**.”

9. In **Jeremiah 1:5** God did not merely **know beforehand** that Jeremiah would be a prophet, but He **knew him intimately** in that He lovingly **chose** him to be a prophet before he was born.
10. God declared to the children of Israel in **Amos 3:2**, “**You only** have I **chosen** (i.e. **known**) among all the families of the earth...” God had full knowledge of all the other nations but He set his covenantal love only on Israel.
11. Jesus said in **John 10:14-15**, “I am the good shepherd, and I **know** My own and My own **know** Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father...” (Ex. 33:17; 1 Sam. 2:12; Ps. 18:43; Prov. 9:10; Hos. 13:5; Matt. 7:23; Rom. 11:2; Gal. 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Jn. 3:1)
12. Therefore, **God’s foreknowing** is not merely His knowing beforehand what people will **do**, it is **setting** His affection and favor upon the people themselves, loving them intimately, and **choosing** them for Himself.
13. **Third**, if God merely looked into the future and **predestined** those whom He **knew** believed in Him first, then the **basis** of our salvation would be our **own merit** not the grace of God.
14. But **Acts 13:48** says, “...and as many as had been **appointed** to eternal life **believed**.” They were not **appointed** to eternal life after they first **believed**, but they **believed** only because God had previously **appointed** them.
15. **Fourth**, because of the **total depravity** and **total inability** of man, absolutely **no one** can or will desire, seek, or choose God

- on their own. Unregenerate people are not merely **spiritually sick**, they are **spiritually dead** and are the **hostile enemies** of God (Rom. 3:10-18; 5:10; 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1, 3; Col. 1:21).
16. Therefore, the only **true saving faith** that God would see as He looked down through time would be the **faith** in Jesus Christ that **came from Him** because He had set His loving affection on those people and chosen them. For **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, “For by **grace** you have been saved through **faith**; and **that** not of yourselves, it is the **gift of God**; not as a result of **works**, so that no one may boast.” (Jn. 3:3-8)
17. Jesus said in **John 6:37**, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” But He also declared in **v. 44**, “**No one** can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him...” (v. 65; Jn. 1:13)
18. **John MacArthur** said it this way, “Salvation is not **initiated** by a person’s **decision** to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Scripture is clear that repentant faith is **essential** to salvation and is the **first step** that **we** take in response to God, but repentant faith does not **initiate** salvation. Because Paul is here depicting the plan of salvation from God’s perspective, **faith** is not even mentioned in these two verses.” (pg. 494)
19. We are not Christians **first** because of what **we decided** about Christ but because of what **God decided** about us before the foundation of the world. We are able to **choose Him** only because **He first chose us**, “according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11).

20. For Jesus proclaimed in **John 15:16**, “You did not **choose** Me but I **chose** you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit...”

C. Now since **God’s foreknowing** has to do with His choosing of those upon whom He has set His covenantal love, **when** did He do this?

1. This took place in **eternity past**. For **Ephesians 1:4** says, “Just as He **chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world...” And **2 Timothy 1:9** states, “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.**” (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8)
2. Therefore, **God’s foreknowing** means that salvation is **all** by **God’s grace** and it is due to His **loving choice** solely on the basis of His divine will and purpose “from all eternity.”
3. We will never **fully understand** with our finite minds the **seemingly** contradictory truths of God sovereignty in salvation and man’s responsibility, such as His **choosing** some for salvation and yet giving the promise of **Romans 10:13** that, “**..WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.**” Our **job** is to simply believe **all** of what God’s Word says and **live** with the **tension**.
4. Everyone who **truly wants** to be saved can be, the **problem** biblically is that no unbeliever **wants** or **seeks** for God (Rom. 3:11). And therefore, it is only because of God’s loving **choosing** and **drawing** that we can have **hope** that anyone at all will be saved.

5. Since we **don't know** whom God has **foreknown**, we must continually **obey** the **Great Commission** by **praying** for the lost and **sharing** the gospel with a lost and dying world.
6. Salvation is **open** and **available** for **all**. And since man is **responsible**, unbelievers are **eternally condemned** not by God's foreknowledge and predestination, but by their own **unbelief**.
7. **John MacArthur** said it like this, "Every **believer** is indebted solely to God's grace for his eternal salvation, but every **unbeliever** is himself solely responsible for his eternal damnation." (pg. 499)
8. Now the remaining **four links** logically follow from God's gracious and loving choice as He then completes the process He has begun.
9. The **second unbreakable link** in God's chain of salvation is this:

II. God's Predestination of believers' Destiny

- A. Look again at **v. 29**: For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become **conformed** to the image of His Son, so that He would be the **firstborn** among many brethren.
 1. The word "**predestined**" (proorisen) literally means "to mark out ahead of time, pre-appoint, predetermine, and foreordain." Once more, the "**before**" (pro) means "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4-5).
 2. In all **six occurrences** of this word in the New Testament (Acts 4:27-28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11), God is the One

who is predetermining certain people or events to a desired result.

3. There is a **distinction** between the words “**foreknew**” and “**predestined.**” Whereas “**foreknew**” highlights God’s covenantal love for those people whom He has chosen to save, “**predestined**” stresses the **ultimate destination, goal** or **destiny** those chosen people are predetermined to reach.

B. Paul then goes on to show that the believer’s **destiny** includes a **twofold purpose.**

1. The **first purpose** is to **conform** believers to Christ. Look again what Paul says, “...For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become **conformed** to the image of His Son...”
2. The word “**conformed**” (summorphous) means to have the same or similar **form** as someone or something else in a real and permanent way not temporary and superficial.
3. Here we see that God **determined** before the foundation of the world that the believers’ **ultimate goal** or **destiny** would be their conformity to the “**image**” (eikonos) or **likeness** of Jesus Christ. This is because Jesus Christ **is** innately and perfectly the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3a)
4. Man was originally **created** in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), but the **fall of man** into sin distorted that image. Although the image was **not lost** in the fall (Gen. 9:6; Jam. 3:9), it was **morally mutilated** beyond renovation.
5. But here we see that all those who have been **foreknown** are **predestined** to be conformed to Christ’s image. And this conformity takes place both **now** and in the **future.**

6. **Right now** from the moment of our salvation until we breathe our last breath, we as believers are **daily** being **spiritually conformed** more and more into the image of Christ through the **lifelong process** of **sanctification**. This is what God is always up to in our lives.
7. In **2 Corinthians 3:18** 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.” (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 4:16-17; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:32-5:2; Col. 3:9-10; Phil. 3:10)
8. Our conformity to Christ’s image is also in the **future**. There is coming a day at the **resurrection** of our bodies, for those who aren’t alive when Christ returns, when we will be **perfectly glorified** in both **soul** and **body** at Christ’s Return. At that time we will be instantly like Christ both inwardly and outwardly in our glorified body.
9. For **1 Corinthians 15:49** says, “Just as we have borne the **image** of the **earthly**, we will also bear the **image** of the **heavenly**.” And **Philippians 3:21** states that the Lord “...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.” (Rom. 6:5; Heb. 2:9-11; 1 Jn. 3:1-4)
10. But until then, as we saw in **v. 28**, God is sovereignly **orchestrating** everything that enters into our lives to work together for our **good**. And according to God’s definition of “**good**,” this doesn’t mean our **comfort** but our Christlike

character, so that we will better **represent** and **reflect Christ** in the world.

- C. The **second purpose** is to make Christ preeminent. Paul goes on to say, “...so that He (i.e. Christ) would be the **firstborn** among **many brethren**.”
1. **Glorifying** Jesus Christ by making Him **preeminent** is God’s **supreme purpose** for bringing sinners to salvation. We see this in the word “**firstborn**,” which doesn’t mean **first in existence** but rather **first in position**.
 2. To be “**firstborn**” (prototokos) speaks of being supreme, foremost, and preeminent. Jesus Christ is the preeminent One in prestige and power.
 3. This is why the end of **Colossians 1:18** declares, “...so that He Himself will come to have **first place** in everything.”
 4. Notice again that Jesus Christ is “... the **firstborn** among **many brethren**.”
 5. The “**many brethren**” here refers to **believers**. This is the **fulfillment** of the Abrahamic covenant, in which “**all the families of the earth**” were “**blessed**” in him (Gen. 12:3).
 6. God’s **predetermined purpose** is to make believers **like Jesus Christ** in order to create a **new redeemed** and **glorified** humanity who will forever **glorify** the Preeminent One with the **glory** He has given us (Rev. 4:10-11).
 7. **John Piper** aptly stated, “God appointed **us** to share the **greatness** of the Son so that the Son might be **exalted** as the **greatest** among the **great**.” (Ricks notes pg. 208)

8. Now whereas the **first two links** of the chain are anchored in **eternity past**, the **next two links** show God's sovereign plan coming into time, space, and history.
9. The **third unbreakable link** in God's chain of salvation is this:

III. God's Calling to effect Salvation

- A. Look at the **first part** of **v. 30**: and these whom he predestined, he also **called**... (Stop there)
 1. This is where God's eternal plan directly **intersects** our lives in time, space, and history. As we already saw in **v. 28**, the word "**called**" (kleteis) here is not the **general**, external call or invitation to everyone to believe the gospel, but is the **special** (or particular), inward call or summons, known as God's "**effectual call**." This is when God through His Spirit actually **draws** those whom He has **chosen** to Himself in salvation. (2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9)
 2. The Holy Spirit does this by **opening** this person's spiritually blinded eyes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, **convincing** him of his sin and his need of a Savior, **renewing** his will to have the desire to seek for God in Christ, and then spiritually **enabling** him to receive Christ by **faith**, so that he actually becomes a born-again Christian.
 3. Because sinful man would never come to God on his own, God's **effectual call** not only **precedes** man's choice but it is what makes man's choice **possible** and **effective**.
 4. The **fourth unbreakable link** in God's chain of salvation is this:

IV. God's Justification of believing Sinners

- A. Look again at **v. 30**: and these whom he predestined, he also called; and these whom He called, He also **justified**... (Stop there)
1. Here we see that **all those** whom God **effectually calls** will be **justified**. No doubt about it!
 2. Justification or the righteousness of God is **initial salvation** and has been a **major theme** of this letter. Remember that people are **justified** or **saved** by **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone** not by **works** (Rom. 3:20; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:7-9).
 3. Now to be “**justified**” (edikaiosen) means that the **believing sinner** is **declared righteous** by God, placed in a position of being right or acceptable before Him, and **clothed** in the very righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).
 4. Now whereas the **first two links** of the chain are anchored in **eternity past**, and the **second two links** show God’s sovereign plan coming into time, space, and history, the **final link** ends in **eternity future**.
 5. The ***fifth unbreakable link*** in God’s chain of salvation is this:

V. God’s Glorification of every Believer

- A. Look at the end of **v. 30**: and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**.
1. As we already saw, to be “**glorified**” (edoxasen) is just another way of saying that **one day** in the **future** every believer will be **perfectly conformed** to the image of Christ in both soul and body in heaven. Again there is no doubt about it!
 2. **Why?** Because **all five** of these **key words** or **links**—foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and even being glorified in the

future—are in the **past tense** in the Greek (aorist active indicative). This means is that from God’s perspective, He views each one of these **five actions** by Him as an **accomplished fact**, an already **done deal**.

3. What an **encouragement** to know that our **future glorification**, though it is considered an **object of hope** (Rom. 5:2), is viewed by God as if it has **already** become a **reality**. In other words, what God has **begun** He is going to **finish** (Phil. 1:6).
4. From the **beginning** of our salvation in **eternity past** to its **end** in **eternity future**, it is **God’s work**, not our **own**. Therefore, **absolutely no one** whom God **foreknows** will ever **fail** to be predestined, called, justified, and ultimately glorified by Him.
5. **No one** will ever **fall** between the **cracks** because there are **no weak links** in God’s **unbreakable** chain of salvation. What God has **already done** for us is the **basis** of our **eternal security**, and this is why it is **impossible** for **true believers** to ever **lose** their salvation.

Conclusion:

In closing, **Thomas Schreiner** summarized this passage well, saying, “Believers are **assured** that **everything** works together for good **because** the God who **set** his covenantal love upon them, **predestined** them to be like his Son, **called** them effectually to himself, and **justified** them will **certainly glorify** them.” (pg. 455) Do you have that **certainty** this morning?

It is this **certainty** that enables us to **rest in God alone** in the midst of the **difficulties, sufferings, and afflictions** that we face in this life. For we know that we are **eternally secure** in God and that He is **sovereignly orchestrating** all things together for **our good** and **His glory**.