

INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday as we were reading Romans, 8:28, I told you it was like the spiritual Mount Everest. It is the pinnacle of biblical revelation to me. We're going to stay on the top for a little bit today and admire the view from this great pinnacle of biblical truth. If you happen to be here for the first time today, I'm just one of those old-fashioned Bible preachers. I just preach the Bible verse after verse after verse and this is how far we have traveled in the book of Romans and I'm going to keep preaching until I get to the end of Romans, but today we're going to look at Romans, 8:28-30.

"And we know that all things" it doesn't say *some* things or *most* things or *many* things. "We know that in *all* things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

When I first started witnessing to other people when I was in high school, I used the Four Spiritual Laws tract by Campus Crusade for Christ and Law number one is this. "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." and I still believe that. But when we start asking, "Well, what is God's plan for my life?" I think God's plan for our lives is revealed right here in this passage of scripture. God has a plan for me and he has a plan for you. That plan does not have as much to do with where we are going to go to college who we're going to marry what kind of job we're going to have. His plan for us has to do with a spiritual goal.

C. S. Lewis, that brilliant apologist, says every morning we make a choice between whether we're going to follow our plan or God's plan. He writes this: "The moment you wake up each morning all your wishes and plans for the day rush at you like wild animals and the first job each day consists of shoving it all back in and instead listening to that other voice taking that other point of view letting that other, larger, stronger life come flowing in. You know every day and in every way we have a choice whether we are going to get in on God's plan or we're going to try to do our own plans. Well, here in this passage of scripture you can discover what God's Incredible Plan is. There are three verses here and I want us to notice three things:

I. GOD'S PROMISE

First of all—by review—God's promise is verse 28. I preached a whole message on it last Sunday, but it says, "In all things God is working for the good of those that love him." Now this promise only applies to those who truly love God. I want to ask you one more time. Can you honestly say you have a deep and abiding and a passionate love for God? Or when someone asks you about your spiritual condition do you answer in some impersonal manner like this "Well, I'm a Baptist," or "I'm a Protestant," or "I go to Mass," or "I give money to the church," or "I do good things," or "I serve food to the hungry." Those are such impersonal responses. When someone asks you about your spiritual condition, can you say with a smile on your face, "I know God and I love God?" Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the most important and greatest commandment of them all was? He didn't hesitate. He said, "The greatest commandment is that

you love God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, your strength." So, only those who love God can claim this promise. Also, you have to be "called according to his purpose" and that leads right on to the second point. Not only God's promise, but

II. GOD'S PURPOSE

1. He chose us ("Foreknew" = **pro-ginosko**)

In verse 29 we see God's purpose. I would like for you to look at two words in verse 29. First of all look at the word, "foreknew." "Those that God foreknew" then, the second word I'd like for you to look at is that big old word, "predestined." That's God's purpose for us. First of all, he chooses us. That's what that word, "foreknew" means. He chooses us to be a part of his family.

Now prepare to have your mind blown! Prepare to be baffled a little bit—I have news for you. Before God ever created planet earth millions of centuries before you were even conceived. God knew you, and He chose you to be a part of his family. That's the truth of the word of God. In fact look at Ephesians 1:4-5 it says it elsewhere. "For he that is God chose us in him" meaning in Jesus "before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will." Now that word "foreknew" is a word in Greek that is "prognostikos". I put that for you because we have an English word "prognosis" "prognosticator," it's what happens every week when you turn on the Weather Channel and they are trying to prognosticate what is going to happen toward the end of the week and they hardly ever get it right! We already know that. But when God makes a forecast, it always happens.

When Cindy and I were in college, we used to sing a song, whose lyrics went, "I was in his mind before the worlds were made/I was in his mind before earth's plan was laid/Because he knew me."

Now this verse does not say what God knew It says, "the people that God knew." We're talking about knowing somebody personally. Before the planets were ever thrown out into place before the stars were littered into the universe God said, "I knew you and I chose you to be one of my children." I know we're going to get over into a little predestination often called Calvinism today. I told a preacher one, "You know if I was not a Baptist, I would be a Presbyterian." He said, "Well if I wasn't a Baptist, I'd be ashamed." But I have always appreciated the emphasis of our Presbyterian brothers on the calling and election of God the grace of God how God is totally sovereign about those he chooses to be saved. Some people get tripped up on that because they think because God chooses some people to be saved, that he also chooses some people to be lost but the Bible never *ever* says that! I'm here to tell you today it is God's will for every person to be saved!

Do you remember I told you last week God's will just isn't automatically done and everything that happens is not God's will? Here's another example of it in 2 Peter 3:9. "God is patient with us, not willing that any person should perish but that all should come to repentance." God really wants everybody to be saved but he also knows not everybody will. He gives you a choice in the matter. Some people think every single thing that happens in life is planned by God, it's

predestined it is just part of his plan. That's like the old fellow that was walking down the cellar steps and lost his balance and he fell down the steps and turned over two or three times. He got to the bottom and dusted himself off and said, "I'm glad that's over with" as if it had to happen it was predestined by God. No God gives us a choice in the matter. There is a belief that is sometimes labeled as "hyper-Calvinism" or "double-edged Calvinism" that goes like this: You're number 6, you're in a fix. You're number 7, you're going to heaven. You're number 8, it's too late. You're number 9, you're just fine. Like there are some he chooses to be saved and some God chooses to be lost, but that's not what the Bible says. God chose all of us who are in his family many, many billions of years ago.

2. He changes us

Here's the second thing not only does he choose us, but number two he changes us. In other words he makes us into something different than we started out. That's the word "predestined" That word *predestined* in verse 29 is the Greek word *prohorizo*. Do you recognize that word *horizon*? We get our English word "horizon" from it. What is the horizon? The horizon is the limit between the sky and the earth and the Bible says God has already predetermined the limit of our existence of what he wants us to be. It is *predestined*. People get all hung up on this idea of predestination. I don't know why they do. It just means God has predetermined what we are going to become. Look again at verse 29. This is what he has predestined that you and I should be "conformed to the likeness of his son." By the way if you are like me and you like words also that word *likeness* or *image* it is the Greek word *eikon*. We get our English word "icon" from it. Is there anyone in this room who has ever used the Windows operating system on your computer? There are little icons on your desktop you click on. That is exactly what God is doing with us. He has put an icon of His Son, Jesus Christ, his personality and his character then he moves all of us to that icon and he clicks on us and he says, "There I want you to be just like my son." That's what he has predestined for us to become. When we came to Christ, he started the process and he keeps on working on us. Look at Philippians 1:6. It says, "Being confident of this he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Some people just do not know what predestined really means.

My wife and I love to go to Destin, Florida. Last fall we were planning a trip to Destin. Before I go on any trip, there are a whole lot of things I have to do before I can leave for it, so I had a list I had placed in my calendar. It was my predestined list. I had a list of seven or eight things I had to do before I could go on this trip. Somebody just looked at the heading that said, "Predestined" and they said, "Oh, you believe in predestination, don't you?" I said, "Well, I sure do." Those are things I have to do before I can get to Destin. That's a great lesson we can learn. You see God has a destination for me. He has a destiny for each one of us. I know sometimes we want to stand there and say, "Mama, what's my destiny?" Really God wants to take us to a certain place and our destination our destiny is to be like Jesus.

God's main goal in saving you is to make you like Jesus. First in your character and finally in your body.

God's main goal in saving you is to make you like Jesus. You need to put that in your mind and in your heart. God's main goal in saving you is to make you like Jesus, first in your character and

finally in your body. In other words, even your body is going to be made like Jesus. Right now he is trying to make your character like Jesus. There is so much confusion about this. I really do think if you ask most Christians, "Why did you become a Christian?" or "Why did God save you?" Most people are going to say, "Well so I can go to heaven when I die." May I disagree? The main reason God saved you was not to take you to heaven when you die. If that's the main purpose in salvation, as I have said before, the kindest thing we could do to any person who becomes a Christian is to take a gun and shoot them and say, "All right! Go on to heaven. That's all there is." No, friend. Some people say, "Well, God saved me to forgive my sins." No that's not the reason he saved you. That is a prerequisite and a benefit of salvation but the reason God saved you and he saved me he wants to make us like Jesus every day and in every way in our character. Now I want to ask you this question How much like Jesus are you right now? If I were to ask the people you live with in your family How much like Jesus are you? If I were to ask the people where you work How much like Jesus is this person? Students if I were to ask the people you go to school with how much like Jesus is this person? What would the answer be? How much like Jesus are you?

You may be saying, "Well I don't really know what Jesus is like." I love those WWJD bracelets the kids are wearing. It means "What would Jesus do?" I have another question that is more important than what would Jesus do? It's "WIJL" "What is Jesus like?" Actually, there are some things Jesus did that I can't do. I don't know about you, but I can't walk on water. Jesus can. Jesus could take 5 loaves and 2 fishes and feed 5,000. I can't do that but what Jesus is like I *can* do that when I allow God to do that in and through me and here's the key. The personality of Jesus is produced by the Holy Spirit. You don't have to try to imitate Jesus. You don't have to try to work hard to be like Jesus. Jesus' personality is produced by the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Look at Galatians 5:22, because those nine character attributes tell us what Jesus is like. See how much you are like Jesus in these areas: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

God is interested in making a whole family of people like Jesus. Some people say, "Well if we were all like Jesus, wouldn't it be boring?" No it would be pretty exciting. Wouldn't it be great to live in a world where everybody was loving and totally unselfish in their loving? Wouldn't it be great to live in a world where everybody was full of joy? Wouldn't it be great to live in a world where everybody was full of peace and patience and kindness? That's what God is doing. He's trying to make you and I more like Jesus. That is our destiny our destination and God has already predetermined to make us that way. So that's God's purpose. He chose us and then he changes us.

III. GOD'S PROCESS

Number three not only God's promise Romans 8:28, God's purpose Romans 8:29 but number three, let's talk about God's process. How does he do this? Well, there are three words in verse 29 that tell us how he does it.

1. He calls us

First of all it says, "He calls us." "Those he predestined, he called." Now you know what it means for somebody to call you. When you are out in public and somebody yells, "Hey!" or

maybe you are at home and your telephone rings and somebody's calling you. It means that somebody initiates something and you respond to a call. I'm so glad God still calls people. When I was nine years old, God called me to be a Christian. When I was 17 years old, God called me to be a preacher. In 1991 God called me to be the pastor of this church. God is still calling people to do things. Are you listening to his call? Now with this idea about predestination, people sometimes think God forces us to do certain things. Oh, no! He does not violate our free will. We have a choice in the matter. For instance let's consider an American Eagle Jet out here at Tyler Pounds Field. There is only one destination American Eagle flies to: the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. If you get on that plane, you don't have a choice in the destination. But you do have a choice about whether or not you get on the airplane. You're the one who chooses to buy a ticket, get on the airplane, buckle in and surrender to that airplane to take you where it is going. But you have a choice in the matter. However, once you do get on that plane, you don't have a choice in the destination. It's predetermined. You also have a choice about following the call of Jesus Christ. God won't force you. He won't coerce you. He loves you and he wants you to love him. He doesn't want to make you do anything.

I love the funny story I heard about the fellow down in South Louisiana. You know in South Louisiana the coffee is so thick and bitter and strong it's hard to drink. This fellow stopped to get something to drink at a little country service station. He walked in and the man behind the cash register took his money and said, "Hey, would you like a cup of coffee with that fill-up?" He looked at the old, thick coffee and said, "No, thank you." The man behind the cash register said, "Aw, come on! We don't get many visitors by here. Please have a cup of coffee with me." The man said, "No, thank you. I have to be on my way." The fellow behind the cash register pulled out a pistol and pointed it at the man and said, "I said DRINK A CUP OF COFFEE!" So he poured him a cup and the man stood there with his hands trembling as he gulped down the old strong, bitter brew. The whole time the guy held a gun on him. Finally, the man finished the cup and put it down. The guy with the pistol handed him the pistol and said, "Now you hold the gun on me and make me drink a cup!" That's strong coffee, isn't it?

Nobody likes to be forced to do anything, and I'm here to tell you God doesn't *force* you to trust him. God doesn't force you to follow him. You have a choice in the matter, but once you have chosen to follow him, the destination is predetermined. So, what about God's call? He is calling you and I today. Let me give you several aspects of God's call. I think all of the Christian life can pretty much be summarized into these three calls.

"Come to me!"

First of all Jesus says, "Come to me!" Matthew, 11:28 says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." I call this the call of salvation. Maybe there are some of you here today who are not Christian. If you died today, you wouldn't go to heaven. Today God is calling you saying, "Come to me. I'll give you rest for your soul." Many of you need to respond to God's call of salvation today.

"Follow me!"

Number two he says, "Follow me!" In Mark, 1:17, he says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." What that means is there are some of you in this room today who have answered his call to be a Christian but you haven't answered his call to serve him. You are still a "pew potato" you're still warming a seat in church. You're not serving God in some Sunday School Class or some ministry. You've not really followed him in service. I call this the call of service. There are many of you who have been saved for years that today God is calling you to serve.

"Abide in me."

Then the third part of his call I call this "Abide in me." In John, chapter 15, he says, "Abide in me and I in you as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me." That means you surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. There are some of you who are serving God but you are trying to serve him in the strength of your own flesh. You surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit and you abide in the vine who is Christ. I call this the call of surrender. Which call do you need to listen to today, to be saved "Come unto me" to serve "Follow me" or to surrender to the lordship of Jesus and "Abide in me"? Before you ever decided to follow him, he decided to call you. He decided to choose you. He decided to predestine you to become like Jesus. So he calls us.

2. He claims us

Here's the second part of the process: he claims us. He calls us and he claims us. Look at verse 30. It's the word *justified*. The word *justified* is a good old Bible word and every time you read it you need to substitute this phrase The word *justified* means *just as if I'd never sinned!* The word justification is a legal term that means to be declared right declared innocent declared to be guiltless. I've often asked this question (I get so discouraged when I do it, I don't do it much anymore) but I often ask people in a service like this, "How many of you are righteous?" Maybe two or three people will hold up their hands and smile real big because they know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I'm not talking about self-righteousness. Well if you are in Christ Jesus you have been justified past tense You have been declared by God to be right!

Let me read to you the way Billy Graham describes justification. He says, "Justification is that act of God whereby he declares an ungodly person to be perfect while he is still ungodly. God places you before himself as though you had never committed a sin." Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him," that is Jesus "who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." You know righteousness is kind of like a garment that you wear and the Bible says our self-righteousness "is as filthy rags" but once you put off your acts of self-righteousness and put on the robe of righteousness that is Jesus, God looks at you in the robe of the righteousness of Jesus Christ He looks at you and he says, "You are just as pure and innocent and sinless as my son, Jesus Christ. For us that's good news. I'm so glad he chose us before the foundation of the world because as Charles Sturgeon said, "I'm so glad he chose me before he saw me because if he had waited until he saw me, he might not have chosen me." because we're all sinners but when we are justified, God says, "You are guiltless!"

3. He completes us

There's one part in the process we've not touched on yet. He calls us he claims us and then number three he completes us! He finishes what he starts. Now if you'll look at verse 30 in the Bible, it uses the word *glorified*. Those of you who know Bible words know we have not yet been *glorified*. That happens when we die and we go to heaven and our bodies are changed to be like Jesus but I want you to look at Romans 8:30. It's in the past tense. You say "Well, wait a minute! Isn't that incorrect grammar? Shouldn't it read, 'He called us, he justified us and he *will* glorify us'? Why does it say he has already done it?" I'll tell you why. There's a great truth here, friend. In the mind of God he's not bound by time and space it's a done deal it's a finished act it's as good as happened. *Glorified* means one day our bodies are going to be changed to be like Jesus. Remember what I said? Right now he's trying to change our character. One day when we are *glorified*, our bodies will change. Let's read about it in Philippians, 3:20. It says, "Our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there the Lord Jesus Christ who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so they will be like his glorious body." God says, "It's a done deal! It's going to happen."

These five links in God's chain of salvation are unbreakable!

This is what I want to say. These five links in God's chain of salvation are unbreakable. That's very important for you to understand. Look back at verse 29. The first link "he foreknew us" that is, he chose us. The second link verse 29 "he predestined us" he changes us. The third link verse 30 "he called us." The fourth link verse 30 "he justified us." The fifth link verse 30 "he glorified us." Those five links in God's chain of salvation are unbreakable because it's not something you can break. It's something God does. Listen! I do believe once you become a child of God and the process begins there is nothing you can do, there's nothing Satan can do and there's nothing God will do to ever change that fact. The Bible calls Christ, "the great shepherd", "the chief shepherd", "the good shepherd" and when he starts out with one hundred sheep, how many sheep do you think the good shepherd is going to bring into the sheepfold? Ninety-six? Ninety-five? NO—one hundred! In fact, in Luke 15, Jesus said, "Do you know what a good shepherd does? A good shepherd would leave 99 sheep and he will go after that one sheep that has wandered away and bring him back into the fold.

I think there are a lot of you here who are maybe like that one sheep. There was a time when you were close to God. There was a time when your heart really burned to serve God and follow God but you've grown cold and indifferent and backslidden and you've kind of wandered off into the wilderness of spiritual apathy. Today the good shepherd is saying, "Hey, come on! Get back in my plan. I have a plan for you and I'm trying to change you to be like Jesus. Don't fight me here! Don't frustrate my grace! Don't quench my spirit! Don't grieve my spirit! I'm trying to do something with your life. I have a plan for you. Let me do it!" Our part in this whole process is to allow God to do what he is trying to do to change us into Jesus.

Years ago there was a hillbilly preacher (true story) from the hills of West Virginia who applied at a Bible Institute at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. A Bible Institute is for those who don't have a college education but want to pursue the ministry. As he was interviewed for admission to this Bible Institute some of the theological professors asked him, "Tell us about your salvation experience." The old hillbilly preacher said, "Well I done my part and God done

his part." That's all he said. They didn't really like that. I wouldn't have liked it either because when it comes to salvation, it's not really anything we do it's all something God does. They said, "What do you mean when you say you did your part and God did his part?" The old hillbilly preacher said, "God's part was the saving, my part was the sinning." He said, "I had done run from God as fast as my sinful heart and my rebellious legs would take me and God done took out after me until he done run me down!" Our part is the sinning and his part is the saving.

CONCLUSION

Have you been reading the newspapers lately about Madeline Murray O'Haire? In 1966 she was the one person most responsible for having prayer and Bible studies taken out of our public schools. I don't know about you, but I think you can target 1966 as the beginning of the spiritual decline of the United States of America. Well now she is missing and \$500,000 from the American Atheists' bank account is missing too. Over the last few weeks they have been auctioning off some of her possessions to pay some of her tax bills. This week they auctioned off her Bible. Somebody paid \$2,000 for this Bible that had been given to her by a children's Sunday School Class from a Baptist Church in Austin. I'd like to look through that Bible and see if anything was underlined or anything marked out. As I was reading this article a few days ago the thing that really broke my heart was this. They also auctioned off her personal journal. Over and over again this woman who seemed to possess such a hatred toward God and the things of God over and over again in her private diary, wrote these words. "Please, won't somebody somewhere love me?" She wrote over and over again, "Please, won't somebody somewhere love me?"

You know you may not be an atheist, but you may be feeling like that today "Won't somebody love me?" Well God loves you. God loves you and he has a plan for your life and it's a good plan. Get in on it! We love you here at this church and we want to be a part of your spiritual growth and your spiritual maturity. Yes we love you! Nobody should ever have to say, "Please, won't somebody somewhere love me?" Instead start receiving God's love and God's plan for your life!

OUTLINE

I. GOD’S PROMISE (8:28)

II. GOD’S PURPOSE (8:29)

1. He chose us (“Foreknew” = pro-qinosko)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... *Ephesians 4-5*

2. He changes us (“Predestine” = pro-horizo)

...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus *Philippians 1:6*

God’s main goal in saving you is to make you like Jesus. **First** in your character and **finally** in your body. (*1 John 3:2*)

The “personality of Jesus” is produced by the Holy Spirit But the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. *Galatians 5:22*

III. GOD’S PROCESS (30)

1. He calls us

“Come to Me!” (Matthew 11:28)

“Follow Me!” (Mark 1:17)

“Abide in Me!” (John 15:4)

2. He claims us. (“justified” = declared right)

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. *2 Corinthians 5:21*

3. He completes us. (glorified)

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. *Philippians 3:20-21*

THESE FIVE LINKS IN GOD’S CHAIN OF SALVATION ARE UNBREAKABLE!



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes