

## The Sovereignty and Security in Salvation # 29

Romans 8: 29-30

Today we come to a passage that I am both excited and humbled to approach. Before we get into the message, allow me to make a disclaimer: these verses are beyond my ability to fully grasp, and I certainly do not have all the answers for every question we have. In fact, these verses have been the subject of debate and division for centuries. They speak of deep theological truth that no man can fully comprehend. John Phillips addressed the difficult nature of this passage. *The key words in this great but admittedly difficult passage are the words "foreknow," "predestinate," "called," "justified" and "glorified." They embrace an eternity past, the present fleeting moments of time and an eternity yet to come. They bring into sharp focus the whole difficult problem of divine election versus human free will, a problem for which we have no absolute answers this side of glory.*<sup>i</sup>

As Phillips stated, these verses force us to examine the questions of divine sovereignty and the moral responsibilities of mankind. Although many portray these points of view to be at odds with each other, they are intertwined within God's salvation plan. Charles Spurgeon was asked if it were possible to reconcile God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. He replied, "You don't have to reconcile friends." However, we cannot deny or avoid the inescapable questions they bring. Again consider the words of John Phillips. *Reduced to its simplest terms the problem can be stated thus: Did God choose me because I chose Him, or did I choose Him because He chose me? To say that God chose me because with His ability to foreknow the future He saw me choose Christ, robs God of His sovereignty. It would mean He has no alternative but to choose those who choose Christ—His choice is governed by ours. It throws the initiative on man.... On the other hand, to say that I chose Christ because He chose me robs me of my free will (i.e., moral responsibility) and makes me a mere puppet. Human free will then becomes a myth.*<sup>ii</sup>

I do not possess the ability to address the debate that continues to surround these verses. My intent today is not to solve this longstanding issue, but simply consider what the Bible has to say to us. These verses were not given to foster confusion. We know God is not the author of confusion. These verses were given to comfort and assure the believer of salvation. I want to examine the [eternal truths](#) revealed as we consider: [The Sovereignty and Security in Salvation](#).

**I. The Particulars of Salvation** – In these verses Paul reveals particular elements of salvation that cannot be ignored or denied. I believe we are given the divine order for our salvation. First we discover:

**A. The Ordination (29)** – [For whom he did foreknow...](#) This is clearly one of the aspects of salvation that creates debate. Although we cannot explain it as we would like, we must embrace it as truth. Our salvation must involve the foreknowledge of God. Many will argue this is simple to explain. They declare that God simply knew we would receive Christ as our Savior before our salvation ever happened. I have no problem with that because I believe our God is omniscient. There is nothing God doesn't know. However, I believe that brief and simple explanation doesn't deal properly with the text. Some hold the other extreme. They argue that God looked down through eternity and only selected a certain group to be saved and the others are destined for hell. In essence there is no hope for their salvation at all.

- Again, we must be able to come to grips with the sovereignty of God, as well as the moral responsibility of man. So, what does the word foreknow imply? It is used three different ways in Scripture. It means:
  - to know something beforehand, ahead of time.
  - to know something intimately by loving and accepting and approving it.
  - to elect, foreordain, and predetermine something.<sup>iii</sup>
  
- The purpose here is to comfort and assure the believer. Certainly God knew ahead of time we would be saved. He loved us and approved our salvation in His Son, electing and ordaining us in Christ from the very beginning.

**B. The Predestination (29)** – [For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.](#) Here is another major point of contention. This is where some argue that God predestined some for salvation and others for condemnation. They declare the predestined for salvation will be saved regardless of their lives or the actions of others, while those predestined for hell can never be saved. I am convinced that God is sovereign. I also believe His sovereignty is not limited to the actions or decisions of men. However, there are countless references in Scripture that declare whosoever can be saved if they will look to Christ by faith. I reject the doctrine that some were born to be condemned to hell and there is no hope of reaching them or for their salvation.

- What does the word predestinate in the text actually mean? It means *“to destine or appoint before, to foreordain, to predetermine. The basic Greek word (proorizo) means to mark off or to set off the boundaries of something.”*<sup>iv</sup> Now, if we only looked at the statement: [For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate](#), we might come to the conclusion that some were set outside the bounds of salvation, predetermined of God. I cannot emphasize enough: context is always of vital importance. What does Paul declare we are predestined to? We are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. John Butler says, “The emphasis here is not on predestination for heaven but on predestination for holiness.”<sup>v</sup>

**C. The Invitation** (30) – [Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called](#). Here Paul speaks of the call of God, literally the “*invitation or bid to come.*” This deals with the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who are saved. One cannot deny or avoid the work of the Spirit in salvation. I am convinced one cannot get saved when they choose to do so. Apart from conviction of sin, realizing one’s lost condition, and the invitation of the Spirit, there is no salvation. We must be drawn of the Spirit in order to be saved. [John 6:44 – No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.](#)

- As the call of God is extended through the Spirit, we must respond by faith. Once our hearts have been enlightened to truth, we must embrace it by faith. Again consider the words of Jesus in the parable of the Marriage Dinner. [Matt.22:11-14 – And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: \[12\] And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. \[13\] Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. \[14\] For many are called, but few are chosen.](#) The man received the invitation to come to the marriage feast, but as he stood before the king he was cast out because he was not clothed in wedding garments. He had not heeded the call.

**D. The Justification** (30) – [and whom he called, them he also justified](#). Paul reminds us again of the justification of believers. We are declared righteous by God through Christ the Son. The guilt of our past has been atoned, the debt has been paid in full. We are no longer viewed as sinful and guilty, but as righteous and accepted in Christ. We have been accepted in the beloved and made an heir of God.

**E. The Glorification** (30) – [and whom he justified, them he also glorified](#). This speaks of our future state with the Lord, but we are viewed in a glorified state at the moment of salvation. Certainly we will possess a new body, free from the sin and burdens of the flesh, but the saved can rejoice in this state of reality now. We are viewed as glorified in the presence of God at this very moment. Once one has been saved, their eternal destination is secure. [Col.3:4 – When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.](#)

- We have covered a lot of ground so far, and before we move on I want to try and summarize what we have discussed. I know this is difficult for us to fully grasp, and if the truth were known, we will never grasp it completely this side of heaven. Again, leaning on John Phillips’ wisdom, consider the illustration he gives. *Imagine two men playing a game of chess; the one player is a master at the game, the other is very much an amateur. The master knows hundreds of moves for opening, pursuing, and closing the game, whereas the amateur plays blindly from one*

*move to the next with little skill and only limited forethought. Both players have free will to make whatever moves they wish. But the master of the game, without in any way violating his opponent's free will, uses every move the amateur makes to drive him into a corner and take his king.* <sup>vi</sup> God brings us to the place, through His tender mercies, where we see our need for Him and surrender the king of our lives to the His lordship.

**II. The Purpose of Salvation** (29) – We have considered the particulars of salvation, and before we finish the text we also need to examine the purpose of salvation. Paul reveals God's purpose in salvation is two-fold. Notice:

**A. The Sanctification of the Saved** (29) – *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* We have dealt extensively in recent studies about the fallen nature of mankind. We are all born in sin, separated and condemned from God. Because of our sin we are hindered from fellowship with God. Long before we were ever born, and even before Adam's initial sin, God had a plan for our redemption. The truth is He loved us too much to leave us in our sinful condition. God desires that we be restored to a right relationship with Him so we can enjoy fellowship with Him. He is actively at work in the lives of believers to conform us to the image of Christ.

- Isn't such grace and provision amazing? God accomplishes in us what we could never achieve apart from Him. He takes a sinner, worthy of judgment and death, saves them by His grace, and begins the work of sanctification in our lives. He desires us to reflect the holiness of His Son. Our sanctification will not be fully complete until we stand before God in heaven, but He is already molding us into the image of Christ our Lord.

**B. The Exaltation of the Savior** (29) – *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.* God is merciful and gracious in providing for our salvation, but there is also an aspect of salvation that we must not overlook. God takes the lives of sinful people, conforms them to the image of Christ, and Jesus stands as the firstborn among many brethren. Our salvation has an impact on others. As they view our transformed lives, the glory of Christ is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend the transforming power of God. Our lives serve as a living testimony to the goodness and grace of God. He uses the power of Christ in us to reach others.

- I do want to emphasize the divine purpose in our salvation. It is certainly for our benefit, but it is also for the glory and praise of Christ. With every transformed life that experiences salvation, Christ the Lord is glorified before man and in the presence of the Father. His life, death, burial,

and resurrection were not in vain. He offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice for sin. In doing so, Christ provided the means of our salvation and brought honor to the Father. God is pleased when the Son is glorified for His finished work!

**Conclusion:** I think you will agree that this has been an interesting and challenging study. There is much that we do not understand, and likely never will in this life. However, I want to repeat, this passage was not given to bring confusion. It was given to offer comfort and assurance to the believer. We are secure in the Lord through salvation in Him. God is sovereignly at work in the process of salvation and He continues to be sovereignly at work following salvation. If you are saved, there is reason to rejoice. You are secure in Christ and slated for heaven. We are as good as there, just waiting on the Lord to call us home.

I do want to emphasize that salvation is available to all who will only believe in Christ and respond to Him by faith. There will not be a one in hell who desired to be saved. [John 6:37 – All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.](#) <sup>[40]</sup> [And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.](#)

I believe there is a proper way to respond to this passage. If you are saved, thank God for your salvation and seek to serve Him faithfully and righteously. If there are friends and loved ones that remain lost, continue to pray for them, and share the Gospel with them while living uprightly before them. They cannot deny the evidence of a transformed life. If you are unsaved, you have heard the truth of the Gospel. The Spirit has dealt with your heart. If you feel the need to be saved, you have been invited of God to do so. The only thing left for you to do is respond by faith and believe in Christ. You can be saved if you will obey the call of God in salvation!

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<sup>i</sup> John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Romans: An Expository Commentary.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Romans.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid

<sup>v</sup> Analytical Bible Expositor - Analytical Bible Expositor – Romans.

<sup>vi</sup> John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Romans: An Expository Commentary.