Is Your Salvation Secure?
Scripture: Romans 8:28-30
Code: P07

For many years people have debated the issue of whether a Christian can lose his salvation. Some within Christendom believe you can lose your salvation; others say you can't. That, perhaps more than any other single doctrine, has been a dividing issue in the church. How sad that is, because the Bible is clear about the matter. It is surprising that many Christians would deny or ignore the straightforward presentation of the doctrine of security in Romans chapter 8. There are other texts in the Bible that discuss the security of the believer, but none are as pointed as Romans 8:28-30.We find in those verses that everyone who has been redeemed by Jesus Christ, without exception, will be glorified.

The key phrase in this trilogy of verses is at the end of verse 28: "called according to His [God's] purpose." We are forever secure because that was God's purpose. The Son of God and the Holy Spirit intercede for us so that the plan of God might come to pass. So our security is guaranteed not only by the purpose of God, but also by the outworking of that purpose through the intercessory ministries of the Son and the Spirit.

The phrase "called according to His purpose" helps us to understand verses 29-30, which explain God's purpose: "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; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

God causes all things to work out for the believer's good, which is "according to His purpose." There is no other way to explain why He does that; He simply wants to. God is free to make whatever decisions He wants. And He sovereignly chose for all things to work together for the good and glory of those who are redeemed. Nothing can change that.

Your Salvation Was a Sovereign Act of God

You are a Christian not because of something you did, but because of something God decided. In Ephesians 1:3 the apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Why are we to bless the Lord? Because "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and

blameless before Him" (v. 4). God chose us and will make us holy. Ultimately, all sin will be overruled. That is another way of saying that all things work together for our ultimate good.

Paul continues in verse 5, "[God] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." God predetermined to make us His sons.

He planned that our salvation would lead to glorification. We are saved by God's plan, and preserved for future glory. So our security does not depend on our ability to stay saved, but on God's ability to keep His promise (Heb. 6:17-18).

Ephesians 1:9 says that God "made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him." God swore by Himself, for there is nothing or no one greater that He can swear by (Heb. 6:13). Because He is absolutely perfect and the Persons of the Trinity cannot violate their word, we are assured of our security.

Ephesians 1:11 tells us that in Christ also "we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His [God's] purpose who works [Gk., *energeo*] all things after the counsel of His will." God energizes all things according to His will. He planned to redeem us. Salvation is not based on what we decide, but on what God decides. John 1:12-13 says, "As many as received him [Christ], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." It is true that we have to respond to the gospel message. We have to receive Christ and believe in Him (Acts 4:12). However, we are regenerated by the will of God. Even our response is according to God's decision.

Much of contemporary evangelism leaves people thinking that salvation is predicated on their decision for Christ. Actually, it is based on God's decision for them. That's the emphasis of Scripture. How could a person ever make a decision for God? First Corinthians 2:14 says the "natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him."

Second Corinthians 4:4 says, "The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Man is ignorant in darkness, and dead in sin (Eph. 2:1). There is no way he could muster up enough of whatever it would take to turn around and accept Christ. God makes the first move in line with His eternal purpose.

The Paradox of Salvation

Contemporary Christianity has a shallow view of salvation. Many people don't understand the security of the believer. God, in eternity past, chose us to believe in the truth (2 Thess. 2:13). Now we have to show a response. I don't fully understand how those two come together. Some people think that the people who go to hell go there because God rejected them. But the Bible says that people go to hell because they reject the gospel (John 3:18). That may not make sense to us, but it shouldn't matter. God is smarter than us. Would you want a God who is our equal? I wouldn't!

The paradox regarding God's choice and man's responsibility isn't the only paradox in Scripture. For example, who wrote the book of Romans? Paul did, but so did God. Did they take turns writing verses? On the one hand, every word is pure and from the mind of God. Yet, every word also came from Paul's heart and his vocabulary. How could Romans have been fully written by both God and Paul? We know it was, but we can't explain it fully.

Is Jesus God or man? He was both. Christ was not a blend of God and man. He was 100 percent Himself. He was fully God and fully man. We can't figure that out.

How about this: Who lives your Christian life? Paul said, "I discipline my body and make it my slave" (1 Cor. 9:27). He also said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Which is the right answer? Both you and Christ live your life.

Most major doctrines in the Bible have an aspect that we cannot fully explain. When we try to bring God down to our level, there is still much we won't understand. We simply can't resolve everything in our minds. So the reason anyone goes to hell is because he rejected Christ and is completely responsible. But when a person comes to Christ, it's because he was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

The Purpose of Salvation

God Wants to Make Us Like Christ

Romans 8:29 says the purpose of salvation is for us "to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." We have been called according to God's purpose (Rom. 8:28), and His purpose is to conform us to the image of His Son. God planned for you to be saved in eternity past to be made like Christ. It is impossible for a person to become saved yet never become like Christ because he lost his salvation. God promised glorification; that is His eternal purpose. Heaven, the forgiveness of sin, and the gifts of love, joy, peace, and wisdom are only a part of the reality of salvation. The main reason God saved us was to conform us to the image of His Son. God is redeeming an eternally holy, Christlike, glorified community of people. When you became a Christian, the process of your being conformed to Christ began. That process must be fulfilled

because that is God's holy purpose.

Romans 8:24 says "in hope we have been saved." Verse 17 says that if we are children of God, we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." We were made sons of God so that we might be heirs. Our inheritance is to be like Christ and to receive all that belongs to Him. It's unbiblical to say that people can lose their salvation, because God's purpose in salvation is to conform us to the image of Christ. The Greek verb translated "to become conformed" in verse 29 means "to bring to the same form with."

Philippians 3:21 says we will be transformed bodily--the Lord "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." Our glorified bodies will be like Christ's. Outwardly, we will be conformed to the post-resurrection body of our Lord. However, I don't think we will all look alike. Every human being is different, but we have basically the same body. Our bodies work in the same way, in the same environment, and by the same principles. Likewise when we go to glory, we will receive glorious bodies that work in the same environment and by the same principles as the resurrected, glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God Created Us for a Purpose

God created us so that there would be a group of people who would give Him the glory He deserves. A rebellion began in the Garden of Eden, yet God set out to redeem sinners. By His marvelous sovereign wisdom, He called back people who rebelled against Him to a place where they could give Him glory. His goal in salvation is to bring believers to glory and let Christ stand as the preeminent One, receiving worship and praise forever.

Now do you understand why you were saved? It wasn't just to keep you out of hell or to make you happy. The ultimate reason God is conforming us to Christ's image is so we will be able to give glory to the One who is most glorious.

That Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren" is a beautiful thought. Christ didn't have to make us His brothers. He could have made us His servants. He didn't have to bring us into His family, but He did. Even though God wants us to glorify Him and His Son, He also desires intimacy with us. He is redeeming us to be one in essence with Himself. We are brothers and sisters of Christ!

God gives us joy, peace, and a future in heaven. Those are all elements of His grace to sinners. But it's not our happiness or our holiness that is the apex of the divine purpose--it is glorifying the Son. Christ is the central point of redemptive history, not you. Therefore, if God saved you, He will glorify you to fulfill His purpose in bringing you to salvation. God's plans don't get thwarted. If they did, He wouldn't be God.

So the purpose of salvation is to conform us to the image of Christ so we can forever exalt the One who is over us.

The Progress of Salvation

There are five elements in the unfolding plan of salvation:

Foreknowledge

Romans 8:29 begins, "For those whom He foreknew." That is where the redemptive plan of God starts--with His foreknowledge. Some people have suggested that God's foreknowledge is the same thing as His foresight. They envision God in heaven looking into the future with binoculars. If He sees that you will believe, He chooses you; if you aren't going to believe, He doesn't choose you. It's true that God can see everything that will happen in the future. He does know exactly what people will do. However, if you maintain that salvation is based only on God's foresight into the decisions of men, you are stating that man secures his own salvation.

Just believing that God knew who would and would not accept Christ doesn't explain how salvation starts with God's foreknowledge. The ultimate problem we have in our finite minds is why God allows people to go to hell. Many try to explain it by saying it isn't His choice to send people to hell; He just knows it is going to happen. However, if God knew certain people would go to hell, why did He bother creating them?

Also, if you believe that God just knew what was going to happen in the future, you still haven't explained how sinners become saved. How can a person who is dead in sin, blinded by Satan, unable to understand the things of God, and continuously filled with evil suddenly exercise saving faith? A corpse would sooner come out of a grave and walk! Simply defining God's foreknowledge as foresight into the future still leaves us with problems.

This is the definition we should give for God's foreknowledge: God does indeed foresee the faith of everyone who is saved, and the faith He foresees is the faith He Himself creates. Jesus Himself said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me .... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:37, 44). John 1:13 says that Christians are "born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "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." God does foresee a person's faith, but it is a faith that He Himself creates.

Acts 13:48 illustrates this truth: "When the Gentiles heard this [Paul and Barnabas preach], they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life

believed." Salvation is ordained by God, and it ultimately ends in eternal life and glory. There is no salvation where a person doesn't ultimately become conformed to the image of Christ for the purpose of exalting the preeminent One. The reason the Gentiles in Acts 13 believed is they were ordained to do so.

God not only sees what will happen in the future, but also ordains it. The Bible clearly teaches that God sovereignly chooses people. First Peter begins with these words: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1:1-2). We are elect by God's foreknowledge. We tend to think that the foreknowledge basically means "foresight" because we don't understand the full meaning of the word. It includes both foresight and foreordination.

Predestination

The Greek word translated "predestined" in Romans 8:29-30 (proorizo) means "to appoint before" or "to mark out before." This word is also used in Acts 4: "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur" (Acts 4:27-28).

The Greek words for predestined and foreknowledgeare both used in reference to Christ's crucifixion (Acts 2:23;4:28). So if we say that God's foreknowledge is simply foresight into the future, we are saying that He saw what Jesus--on His own prerogative--was going to do and reacted to it. That is heretical. However, if we understand foreknowledge and predestination to mean that God predetermined Christ's death to redeem all who believed, then it could logically follow that He predetermined us to be redeemed.

Calling

Romans 8:30 says that those whom God predestined, "He also called." This is where God's eternal plan intersects with your life. In eternity past, He predetermined to have a love relationship with you--He predestined your salvation. The calling is when God moves into your life on this earth, within the boundaries of time. Foreknowledge and predestination describe what happened in eternity past.

Romans 8:28 says that all things "work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called." The term "called" refers not to an outward call, but an inward one. It speaks of when God turns around a person's heart--a heart that could never turn to God, know Him, understand the gospel, or know hope on its own. We know this refers to a saving call because of the context of Romans 8:30: "these whom he called, He also justified." The calling here is an effectual call. It's not just an invitation to anyone. If God predetermined a love relationship with us and foreordained our

salvation in eternity past, then He will fulfill it by moving into our lives. As I mentioned earlier, you are not saved because of something you did but because of what God decided.

What happens when God calls us? He moves in us and convicts our hearts. He draws us away from sin and toward the Savior. Second Timothy 1:9 says that God "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." You were called to salvation to fulfill a purpose that was planned before God created the world. That is the reason we are secure in our salvation. We were saved to be like Christ and to be part of a redeemed people that will exalt His holy name. If that was God's plan from before we were even born, He will fulfill it. No one can lose his salvation; all things are continually overruled by God to work for our ultimate glory

God's call comes to us through the gospel. Second Thessalonians 2:13-14 says, "We should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.... It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." God chose to save us so that glory could be given to Christ.

Now don't think that just because God chose you, you're better than someone else. There is no way of knowing why God chose you or me. One small hint of why He did appears in Ephesians 1:6: "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Whatever reason God had for choosing us, it was for Him, not us. Galatians 1:6 says that God calls us "by the grace of Christ." We are called to salvation through the gospel, by grace, and through the Spirit of God.

Justification

The word "justified' in Romans 8:30 means "to be made right with God." How does that happen? The sin in your life must be removed. God must take your sin and put it on Christ (Rom. 3:23-25). When He moved into your heart and called you to Himself, you were made right with Him. Some people wonder how much time there is between God's calling and our justification. I don't know. That would be like asking how much time it takes for a bullet to go through two sheets of paper. The distinction between calling and justification is theological; there isn't necessarily a time lapse. You are called to be justified. The calling is when God moves to change your heart, and justification is the result.

Glorification

Since God predetermined to love you, redeem you, call you away from your sin, and make you right with Him through your faith in Christ, the next step is glorification. Romans 8:30 says that those "whom He justified, He also glorified."

Did you notice that statement is in the past tense? Your glorification is so secure that God speaks of it in the same tense that He spoke of your salvation. And your salvation is so secure that He used the same tense to speak of your calling, justification, and predestination. The moment He predetermined to love you, your glorification was so secure that He could speak of it as if it had already happened.

The Guarantee of Glorification

You were saved for glory, and all things are working toward that end. This is God's purpose: to make you like Christ so that you can be part of the redeemed, over which Christ will be preeminent. You will glorify and praise Him forever. Before the world began, God predetermined to set His love on you and foreordained your salvation. In time, He moved into your heart and called you away from your sin. He made you right with Himself through Jesus Christ, and destined you to be glorified. That is the security of the believer.

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