

The Purpose of Salvation

Scripture: Romans 8:29

Code: 90-180

We're going through the eighth chapter of Romans, "Life in the Spirit," or I suppose we could call it "Security in the Spirit." We find ourselves in the section of Romans 8 that is very familiar, Romans 8:28 to 30 where it says, "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, for whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, and whom He predestined, these He also called and whom He called these He also justified, these He also glorified."

Now this is a very familiar and a very important portion of Scripture that we have already been discussing. In fact, we've pretty well marched our way through verse 28 and find ourselves tonight concerning our study of verses 29 and 30. Let me back up and just introduce it a little bit.

Many people wonder and debate about this issue of whether you can lose your salvation. It's a sad thing to realize but it is an issue incessantly under debate even today, and it has been for centuries in the church. It has been an issue which has split the whole of Christendom into two camps typically known as Calvinistic or Reformed and Arminian or Wesleyan...on one side there's the belief that salvation is eternal and you can't lose your salvation, on the other side there's belief that salvation is not necessarily eternal but can be forfeited by sin.

This is an unnecessary debate, I believe, because the Word of God is so abundantly clear on the matter of the believer's security. In fact, these three verses present the clearest and most powerful statement of security in all of Scripture. They guarantee without deviation, they guarantee without variation, with exception that all those who are genuinely saved will enter into final glory. And verse 28 starts out clarifying this guarantee by saying, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the true lovers of God, who have come to Christ in faith." God causes all things, that is good things and bad things and neutral things, all things no matter what they are, we went through the whole long list of those things...He causes all things to work together for good. And you remember, we told you that the good Paul is referring to is eternal glory...the good he's referring to here is the good referred to in verse 23 as our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. It is the good of verse 21, the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The whole prior section is talking about our hope, the glory that is to be revealed in us in verse 18, the redemption of the body, the adoption as sons, the fact that we are going to enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, that there is yet something ahead of us and that something is eternal

glory. That is the good referred to in verse 28. And God is causing all things, whether good things or sinful things or neutral things to work together in the end to produce the good of our eternal glory. That is the pledge of verse 28.

And the question then comes...why is God doing that? And the answer comes at the end of verse 28, "Because we have been called according to His purpose." That's clearly the key phrase. God's purpose is fulfilled by keeping us all the way to glory. God's purpose is fulfilled only when we are brought to ultimate good which is our eternal glory. We are forever secured because God purposed it that way, and the Son will assure it. Go down to verse 34, "The Son is at the right hand of God interceding for us to make sure we get to glory." Go back to verse 27...or verse 26, "The Spirit is interceding for us with groanings for glory that are too deep for words." They're some kind of intertrinitarian communion.

So, the purpose of God is our eternal glory. The intention of the intercession of Christ is our eternal glory. The intention of the intercession of the Spirit is our eternal glory. That all works together for the purpose of God. This intercession of the Holy Spirit, verse 27, is according to the will of God. The will of God then is that those who are saved be brought to eternal glory. And the Son and the Spirit are assuring the fulfillment of the divine purpose.

Now the divine purpose then is unfolded in verses 29 and 30. In fact, you could say verses 29 and 30 modify the final phrase of verse 28, "Called according to His purpose which is that whom He foreknew He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn of many brethren, whom He predestined He called, whom He called He justified, whom He justified He glorified," that's the plan. That's the purpose of God, that's the will of God. Those two verses then define for us God's eternal purpose in salvation. Which purpose is the reason why God is causing everything to work together for our eternal glory and so is the Son interceding for us and the Spirit interceding in us with the same goal in mind.

Now we're going to look at verses 29 and 30. That's going to take us in to a discussion of foreknowledge and predestination, primarily. And as we approach this subject, I have to confess to you that this is going to take us deeper than we can really go, and I'm the first to admit that. As we try to understand this vast limitless infinite truth with our puny minds, we're going to have some problems. The problems which are resolved not by reason, problems which are resolved not by further information but problems which are resolved by faith, trust. We're embarking on a journey, tonight, it's a brief one but we're embarking on a journey into divine infinity and no higher pursuit exists.

Now there are a lot of things like that that you can pursue and find yourself hopelessly wandering around in a state of confusion. For example, just think for a while about the fact that God always existed and you're likely if you do it too long to find yourself under the bed saying the Greek alphabet

even if you don't know it. To try to conceive of something that has no beginning, someone who has no beginning is beyond us. And then if you want another exercise in delineating the futility of your finite mind, just begin to think about the fact that you will live forever because you have no conception, no capability of conceiving in your mind something that doesn't have a beginning and an end. And that's just the very initial concepts about God, that is He always was and always will be...and we can hardly handle those. Why would we think that we could somehow wrap our puny brains around infinity at the point of God's sovereign unfolding purpose? We can't and so we have to at the beginning admit we face great immense limitations and the temptations, listen carefully, the temptations are going to be to think they're God's limitations, not ours. Because we are so prone to pride and so prone to define all things in terms of our own abilities, we tend to think the problem must be with God. Somehow He's not fair or He's not just, or He's too fatalistic, or He's left us out of it. Or on the other hand, He is just and He is loving and therefore He's given all the responsibility to us and He can't have determined all of this on His own. And it is, by the way, sacrilegious if you don't resist that temptation. The limitation is not on God, it's on us.

To question the wisdom of God, to question the justice of God, to question the love of God, to question God's defining man as responsible, to question the punishment of God on man for exercising his choice to reject the gospel, to question God for any of those things is merely a manifestation of your ridiculously feeble and proud mind. Now try not to make too many conclusions along the way, I'll try to give you a balanced perspective within the sense of our limitations and present as much Scripture as is available to us, no less and no more. I don't want you to stoop to the absurd point where you say, "Well, I think..." Well, that's nice but we're really not interested. And we're not interested in you saying, "Well, my concept on it is..." Please reserve any such folly, just come humbly to bow your knee before the sacred and infinite mind of God and leave it there. Human reason at its very best, human logic and human understanding are not adequate to the task. They can go so far and no farther. We can't ultimately reconcile this great truth in our puny minds because we cannot grasp the infinite mind of God. Only faith can give us peace with this, okay? Only faith can give us peace with this.

Now the general truth is this, the general truth given by the Holy Spirit is that God causes all things...okay? That's what it says. And He causes all things to work together for our eternal good, our good being eternal glory. Why? Because that is His purpose. And if God causes that, it's going to happen. Why? Verse 31, "If God is for us, who in the universe can possibly be against us successfully?" No one, since God is superior. So we are secure eternally in the purpose of God. It is the purpose of God to save us eternally.

This is not just taught in the eighth chapter of Romans. It is taught as well in Ephesians chapter 1, I'll take just a moment to look at this and I'm not under any allusion that we're going to get all through this tonight, and that's fine cause I want you to grasp this great theme. But in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 5...verse 4, let's start there...let's start in verse 3, why not? Because this is where it all

begins. "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." The source of all blessing is God. He blesses us.

And then he starts to unfold those blessings. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him." That is a monumental statement. Before the foundation of the world, that means before there was a creation, before Genesis 1:1, before anything was created, before space existed, before time existed, before matter existed, when there was only God, before angels existed, when there was only God He chose us before the foundation of the world. That we should be saved from sin? No. "That we should be holy and blameless...where?...before Him." Another way of saying that is in His presence, God chose us before the foundation of the world to make us absolutely holy and completely blameless in His presence, that is to say He chose to bring us to glory. He didn't choose and you must remember this, He didn't choose the beginning of our salvation, He purposed the end of it.

I don't understand why people miss this. Any fair understanding of Scripture leaves it so clear. Verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." Again we read the same idea, it was His will, it was His purpose to predestine us, which is another way of saying He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and He chose to make us His sons through Jesus Christ. And then verse 6 says, "To bring us to the praise of the glory of His grace." In other words, He chose to bring us to salvation and to the praise of the glory of His grace. That means He had to bring us all the way to glory. If we got lost along the way, people would say His grace was not sufficient, wouldn't they? If God has the kind of saving grace that comes and goes and comes and goes and is gained and lost, captured and forfeited and back and forth, that's...that's something short of a securing kind of grace, isn't it, in terms of praise-worthy character?

So He has chosen us, He has predestined us and He has chosen us all the way to holiness and blamelessness in His presence and He has predestined us all the way to the praise of the glory of His grace...verse 7, "We have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses," that means total and complete forgiveness of all our sins according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us. In other words, He has poured out a lavish kind of grace and in that lavish grace His consummate and complete forgiveness of all sins which guarantees our eternal glory. Because if all our sins are forgiven, then that secures our eternal glory. That's why we can say in Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good," even our sin activates God's grace, produces forgiveness and ends in our eternal glory.

And then in verse 8 in His wisdom and insight, verse 9, "He made known to us the mystery of His will." What is the mystery of His will? Well the mystery of His will is, again here's the same idea, it's according to His kind intention which He purposed in Christ. Here we are back to God's will, God's purpose, God's kind intention. And what was it? "To sum up...verse 10, the middle of the verse...to sum up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him we have obtained

an inheritance, 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 the praise of His glory." It's just repeating the same thing over and over again. He saved us, gave us an inheritance, that inheritance involves a predestination, again according to His purpose. And according to that purpose He works all things after the counsel of His will so that He might bring us to be the praise of His glory.

The fourteenth verse, "He has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." He will bring us to glory, He will redeem us fully and the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee, a pledge. I mean, you cannot get around this great truth. God has a purpose, God has a will. God has a plan. Verse 5, God has a kind intention. Again, verse 9, according to His kind intention which He purposed. Verse 11, according to His purpose. Verse 14, a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession at the praise of His glory.

The purpose of God is to bring us to glory. You cannot escape that, it is everywhere in the New Testament teaching about salvation. In fact, look at chapter 2 for a moment, and we are familiar with verses 8 and 9, "By grace you've been saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God not of works lest any man should boast." But verse 7 tells us why He saved us, "In order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." You know why He saved us? So that He could bring you to glory which is the ages to come, that pour out all surpassing riches of His grace in His kindness on you. You weren't saved just to help you bump along temporarily in this life if you could hang on to it. You were saved in order that you might be brought into the surpassing riches of His grace in His kindness in the ages to come. And since it isn't a matter of works to get saved, it's not a matter of works to stay saved, right? It was grace that saved you, it is grace that keeps you and grace that brings you to glory.

In fact, I think it's fair to say that salvation is not based on what man or woman does, and are you ready for this, it's not even based on what a man or woman decides in the purest sense, John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Listen to this, "Who were born...that's speaking of their new birth, their salvation...not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but...what?...of God...of God."

The reason we are confident in our eternal salvation is because that is the plan...that is the plan. I mean, the natural man in 1 Corinthians 2:14 can't understand the things of God, so he certainly can't save himself. He is really hopeless in making any effort to do that since he is blind and ignorant and willfully rebellious and hopelessly iniquitous. Jesus said in John 8:43 to those around him, He said, "Why do you not understand what I'm saying? It's because you can't hear My Word because you're of your father, the devil." And as long as you're dead in trespasses and sin, as long as you are blind, as long as you are of your father the devil, you cannot understand the truth, it's not just a matter of

being smart enough to make the right choice. There has to be a mighty work of God. It's not of the will of man, it's the will of God. And that is repeated over and over.

But I want you to look at John 6 for just a moment. This is a very familiar text, but just to rehearse it briefly. John 6:37, I think, sums it up so well, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." And that statement ought to be locked into everyone's mind..."All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." In other words, the whole matter of salvation is initiated by the Father's will. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. Go down to verse 44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Now look at this. Nobody comes unless the Father has sent Me draws him and I will do My best to hang on to him till the end," is that what it says? No, "I will...what?...raise him up at the last day." Now nobody gets lost in the meantime. The whole matter of the security of the believer is clearly identified right here. They are by the will of God drawn to Christ who keeps them all and raises them up at the last day. Back at verse 39, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I lose none but raise Him up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life and I Myself will raise Him up on the last day." God's will is that whom He draws, Christ receives. Whom Christ receives, He keeps and whom He keeps He raises to eternal glory...that's His will.

You remember that most notable section of the seventeenth chapter of John, and I remind you of it because it's one of the most magnificent insights into this. Jesus was so conscious of His responsibility to hold on to believers that when He was going toward the cross He realized there was going to be a problem because there was going to be a time on the cross, remember, when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" there was going to be a time on the cross when He was going to be spiritually somehow alienated from God and He could not hold on to His own. Now that was a concern to Him, so He prays to the Father in John 17 and in verse 11, this is what He says, and He's anticipating the time on the cross, "I'm no more in the world and yet they themselves are in the world and I come to Thee, holy Father...look at this...keep them in Thy name." You know what He's really saying to the Father? Father, there's going to be a time when I'm not going to be able to hold on to them, would You please take over during that time and keep them for Me?

Verse 12, "While I was with them I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou gavest Me." I held on to them, that was Your will, that was Your purpose, that's what You said, that's what You wanted and that's what I've done. I guarded them and not one of them perished, but the one who was supposed to perish who never was a true child, a true believer the Scripture might be fulfilled...referring to Judas. Jesus is saying I kept them, Father, but there's going to be a time when I can't keep them, that time of sin bearing on the cross and You've got to keep them for Me. What a tremendous insight.

In verse 15 He defines what He means. And He also realizes He's going back to glory and He's not going to be there to be present and care for them. He says, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one." When He asks the Father to keep them, He means keep

them from Satan. In what sense? Let me tell you what Satan wants to do. Satan wants to do this, he wants to destroy saving faith. You need to understand that. That is the whole message of the book of Job, remember that? The whole point of the book of Job is not a man and his suffering and a man and his counselors and a man who loses everything and gets more back. The story of the book of Job is this story, it is the story of the inability of Satan to destroy saving faith. Satan comes before the throne of God in the first couple of chapters. He says to God, the only reason anybody ever stays faithful to You, God, is because You bless them all the time. And if You quit blessing them and life was tough enough, they'd curse You.

And God says, "Okay, go take Job and do whatever you want to him, and we'll see." And Satan assaults the life of Job in the most devastating ways imaginable. He loses everything, I mean literally everything but his cantankerous wife who gave him bad advice like all the rest of the people around him. He loses all his children, they're all killed. He loses all his crops. He loses his fortune. He loses his health. Everything but his life and he would have perhaps liked to have lost that to get out of the absolute misery. He went from..from wealth to poverty. He went from having a family to having absolutely none. He went from being a man of health to a man who was so full of boils and scabs he was scraping them off with a broken piece of pottery in total pain and agony.

But through it all, he never lost his faith in God. And the whole point is at the end of the book he says, "It's stronger than its ever been, I had heard of Thee with the hearing of mine ear, now I see Thee and I repent in dust and ashes." What happened was, throughout all this suffering his faith didn't fail. In fact, at one point he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Through all of the suffering his faith didn't fail, it was strengthened. And God was proving the point, saving faith cannot be destroyed. The severer the trial, the stronger the faith. You see, that's why James said, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials because that kind of experience has a positive effect," doesn't it? It produces patience, and patience has a perfect work.

But Satan wants to destroy saving faith. That's what he wants to do. The Father's plan is not to allow him to do it. And the Father says, "I will never allow you to be tempted above that you are...what?...able, but I'll always make a way of escape so that you may be able to bear it." The Lord will never allow you to go through something you can't endure and in the midst of it will always make a way of escape. The Lord will always provide the strength of the interceding Holy Spirit, the strength of the interceding Son to make sure that no matter what goes on you are kept by the Father's power, because that's His purpose, that's His plan no matter what Satan wants to do.

And so, we see in John 17:15 Jesus saying, "Just protect them from the evil one." You're secure, beloved because that's the Father's purpose. But you're secure because the Son and the Spirit are making sure that the Father's purpose is fulfilled and that the Spirit is constantly, relentlessly, unceasingly interceding for you from earth as He dwells within you and the Son is relentlessly interceding for you in the presence of God at the right hand of the throne. And between the two of

them, you're secure.

Why? Verse 24 of John 17, "Father, I desire they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." I want to bring them to glory, You want to bring them to glory, I want to bring them to glory, the Holy Spirit is groaning for their glory...we saw that in Romans 8 how that the whole creation is groaning, and secondly we are groaning for the redemption of our bodies. The whole creation is groaning for the glorious millennial earth. We're groaning for our glorified bodies and the Holy Spirit is groaning also for our eternal glory. The Spirit wants it, the Son wants it, the Father wants it...I want to bring them to glory to be where I am in order that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me. I want them to come to glory so they can see My glory. That's the plan, remember I've told you this in the past, salvation is all about God wanting to create and redeem a humanity, a group of human beings that can go to heaven for the purpose of glorifying the Son, right? And He says I want the plan to come to pass, I want to see them come all the way to glory so they can behold My glory, the glory which You've given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Before the foundation of the world, remember, the Father because of His love for the Son said I'm going to give You a redeemed humanity. I'm going to bring them all the way to glory. They're going to come to glory for the express purpose of praising and glorifying Your great name. That was the way the Father expressed His love to the Son, by giving Him a redeemed humanity. And the Father's plan was to choose who they would be, to save them and then the Son was to provide the sacrifice for that salvation, and the Son and the Spirit in intercessory work by which they keep those people secure and bring them all the way to glory. And Jesus did His part, is doing His part as is the Spirit and the purpose of God will stand.

So, you see, now let's go back to Romans chapter 8. You see that the marvelous statement in Romans chapter 8, "Called according to His purpose," unlocks everything. That unlocks everything. And then verse 29, "For whom He foreknew He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Listen, He didn't predestined you to the beginning of your salvation but to the end of it which is to be conformed to the image of His Son. When we're finally in glory, we'll be like Jesus Christ and we'll talk more about that as we go through this.

Now as we look at these two verses, I want us to see just two points, and we'll look a little bit into this tonight for just a few more minutes, and then we'll finish up next time. But I want us to look at the purpose of salvation and the progress of it, okay? The purpose of salvation and the progress of salvation.

There is a clear statement of the purpose of salvation and it's in there in verse 29, "He predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn of many brethren." The purpose of salvation, I hate to shock you too much, but the purpose of salvation was not primarily for you. The purpose of salvation was not primarily to deliver you from hell and take you to heaven so

you could just sit on a cloud and pluck a harp and have a great ole time forever. That's a sort of a secondary corollary benefit. The purpose of salvation was not so that you could go up to heaven and live in some mansion up there, as people like to think about in John 14. The purpose was not so that you could trek your way through the cube-transparent gold-jeweled city called the New Jerusalem. The purpose of your salvation was not to make you into a perfect person who would live forever in the eternal bliss of heaven in unmitigated and unending and consummate joy. No. The purpose of your salvation was so that you could be conformed to the image of His Son.

Well what does that mean? Well God's plan in salvation was to make the saved like the Son...to make the saved like Christ. Forgiveness of sin, that's a wonderful benefit. Removal of guilt, the granting of peace and joy and love and all of that, all of those are a part of the reality of salvation, but the goal is to make you like Jesus Christ. And salvation, listen carefully, to be salvation cannot stop short of that, or it's not the salvation God planned. Understood? It cannot just end with calling, that God just calls and then hopes. It cannot end with justification. He justifies but it never goes beyond that and He just kind of hopes that it gets to glory. No.

The plan of God, the purpose of God, the kind intention of His will is that we be brought all the way to glory, and then this great phrase, "Conformed to the image of His Son." We have been saved in hope, it says back in verses 17, 19 and 21. And the hope in which we've been saved is that some day we'll be like Christ.

Now let's look at that phrase. "To become conformed..." literally means to bring to the same form with. This is...this is really unimaginable but this is God's plan. Philippians 3:20, listen, "Our citizenship is in heaven from which we also eagerly await for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," listen to this, "who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." How in the world is He going to do that? "By the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

You say, "How in the world...how is He going to do that?" People ask me the funniest questions. They'll say to me. "Well, I'm a little bit worried about cremation because how is the Lord going to find all the pieces at the end so that He can give me the glorified body?" Not to worry, folks, not to worry. If you're not created (cremated), just stay in the grave long enough and you'll have the same problem because there's disintegration. You see, it's by the same power that Philippians 3 says, it's by the same power that He exerts over everything in the universe. He created the whole universe out of what? Nothing. He is going to grant to us a form like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

You say, "What does that mean? We're all going to look like Him and be 33 years old and have shoulder-length hair and a beard?" Well some of you ladies wouldn't really be too attractive under such conditions. No. It's talking about...it's talking about your holiness, your blamelessness, your righteousness, your spiritual perfection. I don't know all that it means except to say you will have a

body like unto His glorious body and the only thing we know about His glorious body is what we see in His post-resurrection appearances, right? He was visible. He was touchable. He could speak, He could eat. He could transport Himself supernaturally, rapidly. He could live in time and space and out of it. He was perfect and sinless and visible only to those He chose to reveal Himself. But we're going to be brought into the same form as the resurrection body of Jesus Christ in whatever way glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity we'll be like Christ. And it's a spiritual reality and yet there will be a glorified body.

Look at the word there "conformed to the image." This is interesting. Image is eikon, get the word icon from it which is...you know what an icon is? It's a statue, isn't it? It's a replica. The word eikon is used in four other verses with a similar reference to Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15 and Colossians 3:10, and it refers to a purposefully derived likeness, not an accidental one. When you go about to produce an icon, to produce a replica of somebody else, it's not accidental. A statue is a replicate and that's exactly what the word conveys. We're going to be in the image of Jesus Christ and that somehow God is going to shape us into a replica of Jesus Christ. We will not be Jesus Christ, as the son is not his father, but we will bear the image of Jesus Christ as in some ways a son is a replica of his father.

When God made man He made him in His image and in His likeness, Genesis 1:26. But that original image, imageo Deo as it's often called, was defaced and marred by sin so that that original body had to be discarded in the grave. But there is coming a time in eternal glory when the intention of God that man would be made in His own image will again be restored. He became one of us, that we might be conformed to Him.

This is an incredible thing. First John 3 is the familiar promise, listen. Verse 1, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us." How great is God's love for us? This great, "That we should be called children of God," and such we are. "For this reason the world doesn't know us because it didn't know Him." The world can't recognize the children of God, didn't even recognize Him, how can it recognize us? Beloved, I love this, verse 2, "Now we are children of God." It is true, we are now children of God. "But it has not yet appeared as yet what we shall be." This isn't the final image. "We know that when He appears we shall be...what?...like Him." Wow!

The whole plan of salvation is to make us like Him...inwardly and outwardly in our redeemed and righteous and holy spirit and our glorious, perfect, supernatural, resurrection body we're going to be like Christ. We won't be Christ but we'll be as much like Christ as it is possible for glorified humanity to be like incarnate deity. And, beloved, that is the goal of our salvation. That is what God had in mind before the foundation of the world. That's what God had in mind when He saved us and that is exactly what is going to happen. Listen to Hebrews 2:10, here it is again. "It is Christ through whom is all things...I love this phrase in the middle of verse 10...in bringing many sons to glory." You see, that again is the point. The point is He brings His sons to glory, "To perfect the author of their

salvation." If Christ doesn't bring many sons to glory, He doesn't bring us all the way to glory, then He is not the perfect author of our salvation. The ultimate purpose then for us is to be glorified.

But why does He want this? There's a reason for that even. There's a reason and a motive behind that. Back to verse 29, "That He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Why does He want to make us like Christ? So that there will be many brethren among whom Christ will be the firstborn. Firstborn is the word prototokos and it means the premiere one, not in chronology, it means the firstborn was always the most notable child, the one who inherited everything, the one who had the rights and privileges and honors, it's the position of preeminence. You see, God had a plan and the plan was that there would gather around Christ a redeemed humanity made in His image who would view Him as preeminent and thus forever and ever and ever they would praise and honor and glorify His name...and that's why we were saved.

Why do we need to be like Him? Because that allows us not only to praise and honor His name by what we ascribe to Him, but to reflect that through our likeness to Him. Just another way to manifest His preeminence. You see, the ultimate...the ultimate end of salvation is the glory of the Son. And the glory of the Son calls for His preeminence among the whole redeemed humanity who will see that preeminence and forever and ever and ever glorify Him. The ultimate objective in bringing us to His image is that He may be the most glorious among many who are glorious. God wanted holy glorified beings who forever and ever and ever would recognize the majesty and the wonder and the preeminence of His Son. It's just a tremendous concept. He is the preeminent one among many brethren. Hebrews 2 says He's not ashamed to call us brother...isn't that marvelous? We will have an intimate relationship with Him, but He will be the chief one. He will receive all the praise and all the honor and all the glory. The only glory we will have is that derived from Him. The only righteousness we will have is that granted from Him. The only beauty and magnificence in our bearing will be because we have His image.

It's an amazing thing, Paul said, that God set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace. And He called me to this great end. That's why Paul would say to the Galatians, "I'm not satisfied until Christ is fully formed in you." David said, like this, "I will only be content or satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness." The central point in the history of redemption is the glory of the Son on display for all eternity before the redeemed saints and angels. He is eternally to be glorified, eternally to be exalted. He stands over and above the multitude of the redeemed as their King, Priest, Prophet and Savior.

And, beloved, that's why even here in this life before we get there, the object of our life is to glorify Christ, isn't it? That's why worship is such a priority for us. That's why we're not spending our time when we come together with foolish things. That's why we're not dealing with trivial things, fussing around with entertainment and man-centered things. But we have been redeemed, we have been ordained from before the foundation of the world to the end that we would give the preeminence to

Christ, and that's what we do. And until we get to that point, we still pursue the goal. That's Philippians, I've told you that many times, Philippians 3, "I press toward the goal," what is the goal? "The goal is the prize of the upward call." What's the price of the upward call? "Christ's likeness." If that's the prize of the upward call when I go to glory, it's the goal in life while I'm here, so I pursue Christ's likeness here because that's why I was saved in the first place. That's the...that's the purpose of salvation.

Now that takes us to the progress of salvation, but I don't have time. So we'll do that next time. How does God get us to fulfill this purpose? And the progress we're going to see in the words "foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified." And we'll save that for next time.

Father, this has been such a wonderful day together with Your precious people. We're so grateful for this beloved church and the shedding upon Your grace upon us. We're so thankful for the wondrous way in which Your grace continues to transform lives as we heard from the testimonies of those in baptism tonight. We're so thankful for the Word, the Truth, the Living Word which so powerfully challenges, convicts, instructs and orders our lives. We thank You, Father, for all that You give to us in the strength of the indwelling Spirit, for the faithfulness of our great High Priest who has been at all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, who knows the way of escape and who intercedes on our behalf. We thank You that nothing can condemn us for You have declared us just and there is no higher court, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ who has already given His life for us. We thank You that You are bringing through the instrumentation of Jesus Christ many sons to glory and all that You have chosen You will call, and all that You call will come and all that come Christ receives and all that He receives He keeps and all He keeps He raises. We thank You, Father, for the hope of eternal glory and for that glory we await till that time when we are made perfect and the purpose for which You called us, the purpose for which You predestined us in the very first place, that being that we might give the preeminence eternally to Jesus Christ in the perfections of eternal heaven comes to pass. But until that day may we serve the purpose for which we are being redeemed, even now, and may we exalt Jesus Christ by praise and obedience. And we pray in His great name, and everyone said...Amen.

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