Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Conforming to the Glory of Christ
Scripture: Romans 8:29-30
Code: 90-426

We're looking at Romans chapter 8 – Romans chapter 8 and we are talking about living in the Spirit, living in the Holy Spirit. For those of you who haven't been with us for the previous nine weeks that we have discussed this, this is message number ten. I don't know about you but it's going fast for me, and we're having a wonderful time in the preparation of these messages. But the goal of this and the objective of this series in Romans 8 is to help you understand the true ministry of the Holy Spirit in a time when, in the evangelical Christian world, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is misunderstood and misrepresented.

That is largely the legacy of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, which is kind of a third force in Christianity. There's Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism. Those are the three sort of forces and, obviously, we understand the errors in Roman Catholicism. That's why Protestantism exists because it was a protest against their errors. But we haven't made the protest yet, as we should have made the protest, against the Pentecostal aberrations of Scripture. I've been endeavoring to carry on a rather small protest for many years, years ago writing a book called *The Charismatics*, following it up with a book called *Charismatic Chaos*. Many of you have read that second book. It's still around even today and hopefully helping people who are caught up in that movement and its doctrinal deception.

So what we have tried to do in this little series is to bring the Holy Spirit into the light of the Scripture and get Him out of the shadows of the Pentecostal misrepresentations. To be able to know the truth about the Holy Spirit is to be able to worship God properly. God is supposed to be worshiped for who He is and for what He has done in full Trinitarian expression. We are to worship the Father truly, the Son truly, and the Spirit truly, and we are to worship in Spirit and in truth. A right understanding of the Holy Spirit is essential.

It is a strange paradox that the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement claims to be the movement of the Holy Spirit and it is the one most guilty of misrepresenting who He is and what He does. It's almost as if they think if they just keep talking about the Holy Spirit, people will be convinced that they do possess the power of the Holy Spirit when in fact we call that into question because of the doctrinal deviations that are so much a part of that movement that really define it. And most of them have to do with the Holy Spirit, although they're not limited to that. There are deviations in that movement on the doctrine of Scripture, or the doctrine of divine revelation. That is no small issue. They are convinced that God is still revealing Himself, God is still speaking, giving visions, words of wisdom, words of

knowledge, revelation to people is still going on, and that calls into question the singularity of holy Scripture and brings into our minds the warning at the end of the book of Revelation that “if anything is added to this book, shall be added to the ones who do that addition the plagues that are written in it.” Confusing divine revelation is a serious error, and that is rampant in that movement.

And then there’s the issue of interpretation. How do you interpret the Scripture in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement? It is largely a matter of not just superficial interpretation but spiritualizing it, interpreting the Bible by intuition, by experience, reading into it, we call that eisegesis, reading into the text whatever it is that you want the text to say. There is also grave error in the issue of authority. What has authority in the church? Does somebody’s experience have authority? Does somebody’s feeling have authority? Is truth determined by existential experience? Is truth validated by existential experience? Is power in the person to create his own world? Do we have the authority to speak our own world into existence, like positive confession tells us in that movement? Can we create our own reality? Do we have even authority over God to force God to do certain things because we have spoken them and by our faith we force Him to act on our behalf? The issue of authority is a huge issue misrepresented in that movement.

The issue of apostolic uniqueness is another one. According to the Pentecostal movement, there are still apostles, there are still prophets. Apostles still have the signs of an apostle. There’s a new wave of so-called apostles who are supposedly able to do miracles and read people’s minds and hear revelations from God. This calls into question the uniqueness of the apostolic ministry of those true apostles that saw the resurrected Jesus and were so designated in the New Testament.

There are other issues that are concerning. Externalism, more preoccupation with external phenomena than internal sanctification. But it seems that no one area of misrepresentation is any more vast than that concerning the Holy Spirit. So much of what goes on is supposed to be the power of the Spirit/the work of the Spirit when in fact it is not that at all.

Against this backdrop of a dominating influence of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement in the Christian media, it’s important for us to understand the true ministry of the Holy Spirit. And apart from that, as believers who desire to worship the Lord, we want to understand who it is we worship and why we worship Him, and that goes for the Holy Spirit as well. I think most all of us have an understanding of God, the nature of God, the glory of God, we worship God, we know His attributes. We all have an understanding of Christ, the person, the work of Christ, what He’s done, we celebrate that. But there’s so much more confusion and cloudiness about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. As I told you, I guess it was a week ago about the book supposedly written by a four-year-old about his trip to heaven who came back to report that the Holy Spirit is a transparent, blue fog and that book sold five million copies in nine months. There is such confusion about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If we get to the Scriptures, we can see clearly the Holy Spirit identified for us and His ministry delineated.

That's what we're endeavoring to do by looking at Romans chapter 8, so you can turn to Romans 8, if you're not already there. It isn't that Romans 8 is sort of the only location for this instruction – in fact, it's all over the Scripture – but this is a great sort of focal point because so much is said here. You almost have all of those things that are important about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life sort of pulled together in this one great chapter, which I like to call the Holy Spirit's own chapter – the Holy Spirit's own chapter.

The error that launched the Charismatic/Pentecostal movement in 1901 was a misrepresentation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They invented something they called the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which has nothing to do with the true work of Christ – baptizing by means of the Holy Spirit every believer at the point of saving faith into the body of Christ, that's what the New Testament teaches – but they came up with the idea that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an event. It's a repeatable event that happens after your salvation, you seek it, you try to find it, and when you get it, you know you get it because you speak in gibberish and you have more power and you're elevated to a higher level of spiritual power.

In fact, if you get a big enough dose of this supposed baptism of the Holy Spirit, you can enter into what they call Christian perfectionism where you don't sin willfully. You may make mistakes unintentionally, but you don't intentionally sin. This is a complete representation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is a simple description of the work of Christ placing you at the point of your salvation into the body of Christ, the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's once at the time of salvation for every believer and never repeatable and never to be sought.

But again, the whole movement starts with this aberrant view and then goes on to other aberrant views as well. We don't want to get stuck in that movement, we want to get out of it, but I only play off of it because I want you to understand that this is a huge, huge movement. I told you that as of now, a hundred years after it starts, they are supposedly – and this is statistics that I saw just in the last few days – there are about a half a billion people who claim to be a part of this movement. That is a very amazing growth for this aberrant movement.

So we've been looking at Romans chapter 8, getting in touch with the true and genuine ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I encourage you that these are all available to you. You can download them on the GTY.org website if you want to get the series or you can order them from Grace To You on CD;, it's all available there.

We come now to Romans 8:26-30 – Romans 8:26-30. We've been looking at verses 26, 27, and 28. We're going to pick it up there again. Let me read the section to you so you have it in mind: "In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we should but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts

knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the Will of God. 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 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."

This particular portion of Scripture, you might even say is the summation and foundation in some ways of all that we understand about Reformed theology. You might say that Calvinism could basically be birthed out of this portion of Scripture. All of the components that we've come to understand as biblical with regard to salvation, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification are all mentioned here. And, of course, they're not obscure and it is not oblique and it is not hard to understand. It is a very clear word of Scripture.

When we are into this particular section of Romans 8, we are looking at this ministry of the Holy Spirit. He guarantees our future glory. All right? We've already seen previously in this chapter other things that He does. He frees us from death, from judgment. He enables us to keep the law, fulfill the law, to behave in a righteous way. He changes our nature. He adopts us as sons into the family of God. And then when we came down starting in verse 17, really, we began to hear about being glorified. And from verse 17 to verse 30, the whole section is about how the Holy Spirit secures us for eternal glory – secures us for eternal glory. This is the greatest of all blessings.

We read Ephesians 1, "We are blessed with all blessings in the heavenlies." Well, in my list of all the blessings, this security is at the top. To be blessed with a salvation that cannot be revoked, that cannot fail, is the greatest of all blessings. And that means, as Ephesians 1:12 put it, that we hope in Christ – we hope in Christ. That's where our hope is. And the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit of promise – verse 13, Ephesians 1 – given to us as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the guarantee, the engagement ring, God's first installment on our future glory. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift of protection. Peter said, "We are kept by the power of God unto glory, to receive our inheritance." The power of God that keeps us is not impersonal. The power of God that keeps us is none other than the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest of all blessings in our salvation.

Having said that, listen to this quote. This is a quote from a well-known leader in the Pentecostal movement. He says this, quote: "The greatest deception which has been devised by Satan is the false doctrine of once saved, always saved." That's a pretty serious accusation. The greatest deception devised by Satan is that salvation is permanent? Is that a satanic deception? That is at the foundation of their theology. It is a profound lie to say that the doctrine of the security of the believer is a satanic deception, that Christian believers can lose their salvation. And in this chapter and in the very section that is in front of us, I'm going to show you the absolute, inviolable, incontrovertible, non-

contradictable proof that your salvation is forever.

When I think about people who sit in those kinds of environments, looking for the next external phenomena to bolster their fears and their doubts, it's a sad experience for me. People in that situation live in needless fear, fear that they're going to defect, fear that they're going to lose their salvation. And so they have to ask questions like this: How do I keep myself saved? How do I hang on? And the very asking of those kinds of questions assumes a power for the human will that the human will doesn't have. If it's up to you to hang on, it's not going to happen. It's up to you to keep yourself saved, it's not going to happen. These dear folks live in fear, needless fear, for the loss of a salvation that is forever. It insults the Holy Spirit whose ministry it is to secure Christian believers through grace to glory. People in that movement live with discomfort, dread, doubt, fear. That's why they look for external phenomena, to bolster their weak faith and to eliminate their fear.

Let's start in verse 28 because we've already looked at verses 26 and 27. But in verse 28 it says, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good," and that good, I told you last time, is our eternal good, our eternal glory. "God causes all things to work for our eternal glory to those who love God," that being a designation of true believers, "to those who are called according to His purpose." That verse is very, very important. All things, God causes to synergize – that's the verb, synergize – for our eternal good. That means nothing can produce a negative outcome. Everything – good things, bad things, and indifferent things – God works together for our eternal good.

Why? Why does He do that? And this is the key, and I want you to get that if nothing else this morning, and I'm going to come around this point a lot. The reason that happens is because that's His purpose. End of the verse: God causes all things to work together for good, our eternal good, to those of us who love God – not for people who don't; that's a designation of true believers – to those who are loving God because they've been called to do so. This all works out because that's according to His purpose. Salvation is what God purposed it to be. Can we start there? Salvation is what God purposed it to be, what He planned it to be based upon His own intention. We are secure because that's how God designed salvation. Whatever it is at the end will match exactly what it was at the beginning. Whatever God intended for His salvation plan to be is what it will be.

There are no variables in this. There are no loose ends in this. That is why Jesus says in John 6, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will not turn away, and all that the Father gives to me will come to Me, and I will lose none of them, but raise them at the last day." There's no loss here. Whatever God purposes to happen is going to happen. So the end of salvation will be determined from the beginning of it. Let me show you this in a very important portion of Scripture that you should be familiar with. It's in the 46th chapter of Isaiah, back into the Old Testament and the 46th chapter of Isaiah. Early in my study of the Word of God and endeavoring to understand all of these truths, this particular portion of Scripture really came across as a powerful and convincing statement with regard to the nature of salvation and the purpose of God. It was really a

life-changing portion of Scripture to me.

Verse 9 of Isaiah 46. And God, of course, is comparing Himself here to the idols of Babylon. “Remember the former things long passed, for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is no one like Me.” That’s monotheism, there is only one God. And here’s what distinguishes God as God in this passage, “Declaring the end from the beginning.” In other words, that statement means that at the beginning, God can tell you exactly what the ending is going to be. That is God’s omniscience, and His omniscience stretches through all the way to the end.

It doesn’t matter whether things have happened or not happened. It doesn’t matter whether they can be historically recorded or not recorded. It doesn’t matter whether anybody has known them or experienced them, they are known to God. God knows what hasn’t happened as well as He knows what has happened. God knows the future as well as He knows the past. He knows the future as perfectly as He knows the past. There is nothing He doesn’t know. The fact that it hasn’t happened doesn’t mean that He doesn’t know it’s going to happen. I’ll even go a step further. Not only does God know what’s going to happen, He determines what’s going to happen. He determines the end at the beginning. So whatever God’s determined end was for salvation is indeed what that end will be.

Keep reading there. Verse 10 says, “Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not yet been done saying” – here’s the key – ‘My purpose will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’” That is God’s own declaration of the absolute determination that He has, to do what He plans to do. At the end of verse 11, “Truly I have spoken, truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.” Take that and apply it to salvation. Whatever God planned is what will be done. And what did God plan? What did He plan? What is the purpose of salvation? Well, before I answer that question, I want to go back and seal your understanding of this concept of the purpose of God – the purpose of God. That’s critical for us to understand.

We’re going to talk about the purpose of God in salvation this morning, and then next Sunday we’re going to talk about the process of God in bringing that purpose to pass. So the purpose today, the process next time.

Let’s go back to Ephesians 1 for a moment, and I read that because of its connection. Ephesians chapter 1. And I just want you to draw out of that wonderful passage that you have in your mind now because I read it that you’re dealing here with this whole story of salvation. You’ve got adoption and you’ve got grace and redemption and the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins – all of those things that we know to be connected to salvation – but I want you to understand what is driving this is a divine plan.

Verse 4: “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.” What did He choose us for? What was His purpose? “That we would be holy and blameless before Him.” That isn’t going to happen in

this life, is it? That is not going to happen. Oh, I know the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us in this life as we live through this period of grace, but the end goal of predestination was a holy people standing before Christ. So “He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ according to the kind intention of His Will.” It all starts with His Will. But notice verse 6. Where is this going? “To the praise of the glory” – of His what? – “of His grace.” So the goal of salvation is to save people by grace, keep them by grace, bring them to glory, so that forever and ever and ever He can put His grace in their behalf on display.

And even the angels will be the objective of that. Paul talks about the angels looking into the glory of the gospel because they’ve never experienced grace. If there weren’t sinners being redeemed by grace, then that aspect of God’s nature would never be put on display. And so for the praise of the glory of God, for the praise of the glory of His grace, He redeems sinners and brings them into His eternal presence to put His grace forever on display. That’s His will. That’s the kind intention of His will. It’s kind because we get to be the beneficiaries of it. It’s kind toward us, but it’s intended for His praise, the glory of His grace.

Further, verse 7: We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the riches of His grace are lavished on us, all of these kinds of things. Why is He doing this? Verse 11: We have an inheritance, we’ve been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His Will.” He had a purpose. He predestined us to that purpose. He works everything according to that purpose, according to His Will – verse 12 – “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.” In other words, the end is that all the people He predestined will be saved and will be glorified and will be forever to the praise of the glory of His grace. That’s His purpose, that’s His intention, that’s His plan, and that’s exactly what He’s doing. And He gave us a guarantee. Verse 13, the end of the verse, we were sealed in Christ, sealed, protected, with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the pledge of our inheritance, the guarantee, “with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession” – which we are, again – “to the praise of His glory.”

If you don’t understand the concept of the security of the believer in the bigger context of the divine power of God and the purpose of God and the omniscience of God, you will not get the grasp that you need to have of this massive cosmic reality.

In the 6th chapter of Hebrews, there is another very compelling testimony given to the security that we possess because of the purpose of God. In Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 17 – by the way, earlier in chapter 6, talking about people who fell away from the truth, who were not true believers who fell away even though they were exposed to all revelation, they are worthless, cursed, burned, verse 8 says. But then turns the table and begins to talk to believers in verse 9, “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you.” And speaking of us, drop down to verse 17, “In the same way, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath.”

This is amazing. God wanted to show the heirs of the promise the promise of God for eternal glory. We are the heirs waiting for the full inheritance. He wanted to show us the unchangeableness of His purpose. It's not going to change. Whatever He purposed, He will do. "He interposed with an oath so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." What are the two things? A promise and an oath. God promised and then He swore to be faithful on His promise. And by those two unchangeable things, God declares the unchangeableness of His purpose, and as a result, He who cannot lie has allowed us to take refuge with strong encouragement, gripping tightly the hope that is set before us. This hope, verse 19 says, is an anchor of the soul.

I don't know how people live under teaching that threatens them with the loss of their salvation. We have an anchor that is literally all the way – the next two verses say in Hebrews 6 – all the way in the Holy of Holies, all the way in the veil connected to Christ. We have an unchangeable God who has made unchangeable promises and then He added an oath on top of a promise so that by two unchangeable realities, the God who cannot lie has pledged to us the promise of eternal glory and thus He has given to us the hope that is secure. And we are kept secure by the intercession of the Son of God at the right hand of God and by the ongoing intercession of the Spirit in us, verses 26 and 27, by which the Spirit continually prays according to the Will of God and thus we are secured, first of all, by the promise of God; secondly, by the priestly work of Christ; and thirdly by the intercession of the blessed Holy Spirit in a personal way for us.

Your salvation is eternal because that's the way God designed it. That's the way He planned it, and that's the way it will occur. Everything works, then, together for our good because that's consistent with the purpose of God. So what is the purpose of God in our salvation? What is it? Well, you say, "To get us into heaven." Well, that's a little short of the real purpose. I mean that's on the way to getting there. I think so many people think it's just a matter of trying to get there, just get to heaven and hope, you know, when they pass out the harps you get, you know, at least a small one to play and, you know, like a small cloud to sit on and you can pluck away forever in a perfect environment. That's a long way from grasping the realities of heaven. That's part of the foolishness that comes out of these books that are written by people who take trips to heaven.

I'm on the brink of writing another book, and it's going to be on do-you-want-to-know-the-truth-about-heaven because when you compare all these crazy stories about people who went to heaven, none of them agree. So wherever they're going, it isn't heaven or they would all agree because heaven is what heaven is and it's not what all these people say who all disagree. The truth is in the Word of God. And when you do go to heaven, what is going to be the goal? What is going to be the objective?

I want you to see this, so let's go back to Romans 8 and just in a few minutes here, look at the purpose – the purpose. God's purpose will be fulfilled, that's the point we've been making, the fact of

His purpose, the fact of His purpose is established before the foundation of the world. He predetermined it and that's how it'll turn out. Whatever He plans is the way it will be. The end will be the same as the beginning. But what is this goal? What is the objective? Why is God working all things to get us into eternal glory? Why is that His purpose? Why have we been called to that end? Why have we been foreknown, predestined? Here's the answer, middle of verse 29, here's the secondary goal, the secondary objective: That we would become conformed to the image of His Son. That we would become conformed to the image of His Son – did you hear that? That we would become conformed to the image of His Son.

In the book by the little four-year-old, he says, "Heaven is just full of children running all over everywhere." Really? Heaven is just full of children running all over everywhere? I don't think so. I don't think so. Whoever is in heaven is conformed to whose image? Christ. Full, glorified manhood, womanhood, humanity. This is the secondary goal of salvation, that we would become conformed to the image of His Son. That's the purpose. What does that mean, that we would be like Christ? It doesn't mean you look like Him in terms of facial features. What it does mean is that as much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, we'll be like Him. Philippians 3:20-21 says we'll have a body like unto His glorious body, right? First John 3:1 and 2, we'll be like Him, for we see Him as He is. That is the prize of the upward call. Philippians 3: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the upper call." What is the prize of the upper call? Christlikeness.

Now, right now, the Holy Spirit is conforming us, isn't He? From one level of glory to the next. We've been working through that. Shaping us into the image of Christ as we gaze at His glory in the Scripture. As Christ becomes more glorious to us, as we know more about Him, the Spirit literally shapes us into His image, but that won't be complete, that won't be perfect until we are raised and the redemption of our body takes place as mentioned earlier in the chapter. But when we do get to heaven, the goal is that we would be conformed – the verb means to bring into the same form, just exactly what it says – to bring into the same form as the image of Christ. Image is *eikn* from which we get icon. It's used four times in the New Testament with similar reference to Jesus Christ. It is the verse used – the word used in 2 Corinthians 3:18, that we would be conformed in His image from one level of glory to the next. It's used again in chapter 4, speaking again of the form of Christ. Colossians 1, Colossians 3, this form is a derived form, not an accidental or an incidental form. In other words, it isn't oops – He showed up to look a lot like Jesus, as some coincidental similarities might occur in human life. This is a derived form. Literally, we are brought into the same form intentionally. And again it doesn't mean that we will all have the same exact physical features as Christ, but it means we will essentially be what He is and that is perfect, mature, righteous, holy, pure humanity.

And remember, we talked about this, didn't we? That Christ becomes the model for us. He is the perfect human. He shows us what perfect purity, perfect holiness, perfect righteousness looks like. He's the standard. He was in the form of God, He then took on the form of man. He came into the world, yes, to validate God's plan by providing a sacrifice for sin. But He also came to demonstrate

God's plan. So when you think about heaven, think about Christ and think about the fact that everything you see to be true about Christ will be true about you. That's a longshot, wouldn't you think? That's a stretch. But essentially He shows us what perfect humanity looks like, what absolutely holy, righteous humanity is. And the purpose of God was to conform us to that image. It's not about incidental things, it's about being like Christ. Being like Christ. As we gaze at Him, the Holy Spirit little by little shapes us into His image – little by little. Paul says, "Not as though I have attained" – Philippians 3 – "but I press toward the mark." But one day, we will be like Him.

That is the secondary purpose of God – that is the secondary purpose of God. What's the primary purpose? Keep reading. Back to verse 29. The primary purpose is so that He – the secondary purpose is so that you would be conformed to His Son; the primary purpose is so that He, His Son, would be the firstborn among many brethren. Now, you say, "Well, that doesn't sound too important, firstborn among many brethren. That sounds kind of mundane." That's because you don't understand the word "firstborn." And in some ways, I wish that was not the way they translated this because *prtotokos* means so much more than what is assumed when you see that, like the first child born in a family. That's kind of how we handle it in our culture because we don't do like the ancients do, we don't give special merit typically to the firstborn son in a family as the primary child.

You know, hey, we were raised in a democracy where everything is supposed to be equal, and, you know, we divvy up everything equal to the kids. In ancient times, when you passed the estate on, you passed it on to the most mature child, which would be the firstborn son, the one who had the strength and the abilities to manage the family estate and he'd take all the assets and everything, the liabilities that they had, and make sense out of it all and continue the family estate and care for all the extended family that would be a part of that in those ancient cultures. So you gave it to the firstborn, the one who had the most experience, who had the most maturity, who had the age, he was considered to be the premier one. That's kind of where that word comes from, but it means so much more than that.

The word firstborn, I would love to just have you think of it as the preeminent one – the preeminent one – so that you would read it to say that He might be preeminent among many brethren. You know, it's amazing that in Hebrews chapter 2, the Lord is not ashamed to call us His brothers, believers. We've been adopted into the family of God. We are sons of the family. We are brothers to Christ, in a sense. We are partakers in the divine nature – however a glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, that we will have, that we will experience. I don't know the essence of all of that, but I do know that the reality of it is holiness, absolute perfect holiness, purity, righteousness.

So that will be ours, and there's no reluctance on the part of God to give that to us, to give His own righteousness to us. He's already imputed it to our accounts in justification, and it'll be a reality in glorification. He's not reluctant to give us that, in a sense, to share His glory with us ultimately. In fact, He will conform us to the image of His Son so that we will actually reflect the Son's glory. But in the

end, though we are brothers, Christ will be the *prtotokos*. He will be the preeminent one. That, dear friend, is the goal of salvation. The goal of the mission of God in the world is to create a preeminence for His Son, the Son of His love, the beloved one, in an eternal heaven where He will forever be exalted by those who love Him and adore Him. You say, “Well, the angels could have done that.” Not from the vantage point of grace. Not from the vantage point of mercy. And He cannot put on display forever the praise of the glory of His grace unless He creates man, redeems sinners, takes them to heaven.

In the end, and I’ve said this through the years, the whole purpose of salvation was that the Father loved the Son so perfectly, so infinitely, so gloriously, so majestically – so perfectly that He had to demonstrate that love. And how was the Father going to demonstrate His love to the Son? He was going to give Him a vast glorified corps of saints who forever and ever and ever would praise Him and honor Him. That’s why He did this. It’s secondary that you are conformed to His image. It’s primary that because you’re now conformed to His image, you can glorify Him forever. The preeminence of Christ is everything. That’s why Philippians 2 says He gave Him a name that’s above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee bows.

In Colossians 1, there is a statement – it really starts in verse 15: “He is the image of the invisible God, He is the *prtotokos* of all creation – the firstborn of all creation.” Well, He’s not the first person created. You had all the people created before Jesus was created, the eternal Son, of course, never was created but the man Jesus was created in the womb of Mary. He’s not the firstborn chronologically of all creation, but of all that have ever been created, He’s the *prtotokos,* He’s the premier one. He’s the preeminent one, that’s what it means. And to go on to define that, He is the *prtotokos* of all creation, for by Him all things were created in heaven and earth, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him, He’s before all things. In Him, all things hold together. He’s the head of the church. He is the beginning. He is the *prtotokos* of the dead; that is, of all that have ever been raised from the dead, He is the premier and preeminent one. He therefore has Himself first place in everything.

And then this: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure.” What did God want? It was His pleasure to honor His Son. It was His pleasure to bring that about by redeeming sinners who would constitute an eternal corps of people who would honor His Son, glorify His Son, serve His Son, and even reflect the very glory of His Son. That was His purpose. His purpose was not to get people halfway to heaven and have them fall off and go to hell. His purpose was not to save them for a while. His purpose was not to bring the gospel to them, hope they believe, and hope they could hang on. His purpose was to create a redeemed humanity of saints who came to heaven by grace who would forever and ever and ever praise the One who died to make that possible: the Son of God.

God gives us joy, peace, heaven, but not just for us. We’re the secondary purpose. But the apex of the divine purpose is that so all of us who are there forever can glorify His Son. Christ is the central

focal point in the history of redemption. He is eternally to be glorified and honored. Purpose of salvation then is Christ. It's the Father's love for the Son. I've often put it this way: The Father set out in redemption to find a bride for His Son. That's why heaven is called the bridal city, the New Jerusalem, right? Adorned as a bride. That's why the church is called the bride of Christ and He's the bridegroom. The whole of redemptive history is the Father finding a submissive, loving bride for His Son who will praise and honor Him forever and ever and ever. That's the purpose of God and that's what He's doing.

Back to Isaiah 46, "I plan it, I do it." And then back to John 6, Jesus said, "All the Father gives Me will come to Me, I will lose none of them. Raise them up in the last day." Consequently, "Whomever God foreknew" – verse 29 – "He predestined and He predestined them to become conformed to the image of His Son so that His Son would be the preeminent one among many brethren." And then the process: He predestined, He called, He justified, He glorified. There's no loss. Whomever He predestined, He called. Whomever He called, He justified. Whomever He justified, He glorified.

And by the way, verse 31: "If God is for us" – what? If this is the plan, do you think somebody is going to mess it up? So rejoice in your security, rejoice in the intercessory work of Christ at the throne of God on your behalf, rejoice in the ongoing intercessory work of the Spirit in your heart, rejoice in the magnanimous, gracious, wondrous purpose of God, which will come to pass. Now, some of you are looking at those words, "foreknowledge," "predestination," "calling," and wondering, "How does that all work?" So that's next Sunday. Okay? That's next Sunday.

Now, I'm going to pray in just a minute, but we're going to keep doing what we did last week. I'm going to pray and then I want you to just sit quietly, don't leave, and as I said last week, this is a time for meditation. This is a time for you to think about what was said. You know, we get kind of in a habit around here of hurrying off to the next event. I want you to just sit quietly while Jan plays the organ for a little while and think about the things that you've heard. And then as it gets loud, you'll know you can move on to fellowship. And before I close in a word of prayer, just a reminder, tonight is time around the Lord's Table, and what a wonderful time that is going to be. It's just going to be a time of celebrating the cross and coming before the Lord at His table. So be with us at 6:00 tonight. And know this: The prayer room is open to my right for any of you who have any spiritual needs. We'd love for you to come. There are folks there who would desire to speak with you.

Now, Father, we are so grateful for time this morning to try to talk about these things. I feel so weak and so feeble and so incapable of even beginning to express the grandeur and the greatness of these truths. This preacher is ill-equipped to grasp the infinite majesty of these realities. We can only pray, Lord, that somehow our humble words, our feeble efforts can be enhanced and enriched by, again, the wonderful teacher that resides in us, the anointing we have from God, the Holy Spirit Himself, to take us down even deeper into the glories of these redemptive realities. Thank You for the folks who are here who are rejoicing in a true salvation that is forever, who are living in a confident hope, whose

hope is anchored, their souls are anchored, because their salvation is real. Lord, there will be some people here who don’t have the confidence that they have a true salvation, who are struggling, maybe some people who know they don’t have a salvation, they have no hope, they are hopeless without God in the world, and headed for judgment. I pray, Lord, that they would turn to Christ and to the promise of eternal life in Him. And there are others who have doubt, questions, wondering whether they’re really saved or not. I pray, Lord, that You will draw them genuinely and savingly to Christ and that You will give them that true hope. May the Spirit witness with their spirit that they are truly the children of God. Thank You for all that You have deposited in our minds today, and may it go from our minds to our hearts that it might come forth in worship and obedience. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

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