

Union With Christ:

Purpose and Glory

Romans 8:29-30 ESV

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Introduction:

No Condemnation

- Have you ever stopped to consider what it truly means to be saved?
- Too often, we treat salvation like an escape hatch from hell or a cosmic erasure of our debt.
- But Paul tells us the gospel is radically larger than that.

- In Romans 8:1, Paul opens with a triumphant declaration: ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”***
 - Notice the location.
 - It does not say there is no condemnation for those who try hard, or those who have clean track records.
 - It is for those who are **in Christ**.

- Our sin was not simply brushed under a rug by a holy God.
 - The believer’s sin was completely, utterly condemned in the flesh of Jesus Christ.
 - When Jesus hung on that cross, your specific guilt was transferred to His account.

As the classic hymn *It Is Well With My Soul* beautifully puts it:

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—

My sin, not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

- But God did not save you merely to leave you neutral (even Stevens).
 - He didn't just clear your debt; **He altered your identity.**
 - As author Thomas Worley writes, “*He doesn’t save us so we can merely be forgiven; He saves us so we can be welcomed 'in Christ.'*”
 - You have been adopted as sons and daughters.
 - You have been granted the right to an immeasurable inheritance.
 - Through union with Jesus Christ, His perfect righteousness has been legally imputed—credited—to your account.

- Furthermore, to guarantee this reality, God has given you the Holy Spirit.
 - He is the Spirit of adoption.
 - He is the very same Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).
 - And just as He raised Christ from the dead, his same Spirit will one day give life to your mortal, decaying bodies.

- This revelation will take place when the sons of God are finally revealed to creation in their resurrection bodies.
- Until that day comes, we live in tension.
 - **By the power of the Spirit**, we are called to daily put to death the deeds of the physical body.
 - We live in a broken world, which means we must suffer *with* and **in Christ**.
 - We are united to Him in the “good things,” but we are also united to Him in His suffering.
 - Yet, Paul reminds us that our temporal, passing earthly trials cannot even be compared to the weight of glory that awaits us **in Christ**.
- Even now, in the middle of our suffering, we are not left alone.
 - The Holy Spirit actively helps us.
 - He intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.
 - He prays perfect prayers that align exactly with God’s will, orchestrating and working all things together for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28).

- His purpose is our good, and all that we experience that is truly good flows directly from His sovereign purpose.
 - To understand how this massive cosmic plan works out in real-time, Paul pulls back the curtain of eternity in our primary text today: Romans 8:29-30.
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The Sovereign Blueprint: Ephesians 1 as Our Foundation

Before we dissect Romans, we must look at the grand tapestry of Ephesians 1:3-14 to see just how deep this union runs. Paul writes:

Ephesians 1:3-14 ESV

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. [7] In him we have

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him. [11] In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, [12] so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. [13] In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- Look at the repetition in that passage: ***in Christ, in Him, in the Beloved.***
 - Your salvation did not start the day you walked an aisle, raised a hand, or said a prayer.

- It began before the foundation of the world.
 - God's ultimate plan for the fullness of time is to unite all things in heaven and earth **in Jesus Christ**.
 - **In Christ**, you obtained an inheritance.
 - **In Christ**, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who acts as the down payment—the guarantee—until we take full possession of it.
 - All of this happens for one ultimate reason: to the praise of His glorious grace.
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The Golden Chain of Salvation: Five Verbs of Certainty

In Romans 8:29-30, Paul provides the precise details of how God carries out this eternal purpose.

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Theologians call these verses "The Golden Chain of Redemption." It contains five distinct

verbs: *foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified.*

- In the original Greek text, every single one of these verbs is written in the aorist indicative tense.
 - This is crucial.
 - The aorist indicative denotes a *completed past action.*
 - From our finite, human perspective trapped in time, some of these events haven't happened yet.
 - But from God's perspective outside of time, the entire chain is already done.
 - It is an unshakeable, unbreakable reality.
- Let's look at each link.

1. Foreknew (*Proginosko*)

- To foreknow does not merely mean to know something or someone beforehand.
 - The Greek root word here is *ginosko*, which implies deep, intimate, experiential knowledge.
 - We see this in the Old Testament Septuagint translation context—for example, when the scriptures say "Adam *knew* Eve."

- It speaks of a covenantal love. (i.e. marriage covenant which is picture of Christ and His church)
- Foreknowledge is not God looking down the corridors of time, seeing that you would choose Him, and then choosing you back based on your response.
 - If God chose you based on your response, salvation would ultimately depend on you and not His purpose and grace.
 - Rather, foreknowledge means God set His relational, covenantal, saving love upon you before time began, according to His own redemptive purpose and grace. WOW!

2. Predestined (Pre-determined)

- Because He loved you beforehand, He predestined you.
 - This means He pre-determined your destination.
 - As we saw in Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11, this predestination is entirely *“according to the purpose of his will.”*
- What exactly has He predestined you to?
 - To be conformed to the image of His Son.

- The ultimate "good" promised in Romans 8:28 is not earthly comfort, wealth, or a pain-free life.
 - The ultimate good is that you will look like Jesus.
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- This process began at your conversion and continues through progressive sanctification.
 - As Romans 6:4 states: *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”*
 - But the final culmination of this predestined purpose is the resurrection, when you receive a glorified body in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection body.
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- Why is God doing this?
 - *“In order that he [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*
 - The word for firstborn is *prototokos*.
 - *Proto* means first in rank;
 - *Tokos* means born.
 - Paul is not speaking about chronological order or time; he is speaking about preeminence and rank.

- **Jesus is the eternal God**, yet He **stepped into time** to become the highest-ranking, supreme brother among a massive, redeemed family.

As the famous Christmas hymn *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* proclaims:

*Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail th' incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel.*

3. Called (*Kaleo*)

- Moving to verse 30, we see that those He predestined, He also *called*.
 - The Greek word *kaleo* means to summon aloud or invite.
 - This isn't just the general invitation of the gospel preached to the whole world.
 - This is the effectual, life-giving call of the Holy Spirit.
- It is the moment in time when the Spirit of God applies the Word of God to your dead heart, causing you to be regenerated, born again, and awakened to saving faith.
- It is God saying, "Let there be life," and your heart responding in faith.

4. Justified (Made Right With God)

- Those He called, He also *justified*.
 - Justification is the legal declaration that you are completely right with God. How?
 - Because your sins were punished in Christ on the cross, and His perfect life was credited to you.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 captures this glorious exchange perfectly: *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
 - When God looks at you in Christ, He sees the flawless righteousness of His Son.

5. Glorified (The End Goal)

- Finally, those He justified, He also *glorified*.
 - This is the most breathtaking link in the chain.
 - You and I are still battling sin.
 - We still get sick.
 - We still age.
 - We are clearly not yet glorified.
- Yet, Paul puts this verb in the past tense!
- Why?
 - Because its certainty is absolute.
 - God is eternal.

- He is not constrained by time, space, or finite human limitations.
- What God decrees in eternity past is so secure that it can be spoken of as already finished.
- In layman's terms: nothing can stop God's eternal purpose. Absolutely nothing!

This is why Paul immediately follows this chain in verse 31 by asking: *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

The Main Point

- The main point is that believers are securely and eternally united to Jesus Christ through a sovereign plan orchestrated entirely by God.
 - This union guarantees that every detail of a believer's life—including suffering and trials—is being used by God to fulfill His ultimate purpose:
 - conforming them into the image of Jesus for His preeminent glory.

So, what does that mean for your life this week?

- As believers, we can live with total, unshakeable assurance.
 - We know that everything—every tear, every trial, every heartbreak, and every victory—is working together for our ultimate good because we love God and are called according to His purpose.
- And what is that purpose?
- *To sum up all things in Christ and to conform you into His image.*

His purpose is your good, and your good is locked inside His purpose.

Look at how beautifully the Trinity coordinates your salvation:

- The Father decreed it in eternity past through foreknowledge and predestination.
 - The Son accomplished it in time defeating sin and death with His own His blood, providing justification and resurrection.
 - The Holy Spirit applies it to your life through His powerful call and eternal seal.
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- Because your salvation rests entirely on the character and power of the Triune God, you have a sure hope.
 - It truly is an anchor for your soul, holding you fast even in the midst of a fallen world filled with sin, sickness, a cursed creation, and heavy suffering.
 - If God has already spoken your future glorification into existence, as a completed fact, will He not carry you through today's trials?
 - **Won't God do it? Yes, He will!**
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