

The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



God Is In Control?

Romans 8:28-30

Sunday, July 26, 2026

Have you ever wished you had a time machine or a magic glass ball? Life is full of surprises. Sometimes, those surprises are good. Other times, they are very hard. When hard times hit, we often feel lost. We wonder if anyone is in control. We wonder if things will ever be okay again. College classrooms and big thick books are full of deep thoughts about how the world works. But the Bible gives us a very clear and deep truth. It tells us that God is completely in charge. He is never surprised. He knows the end of the story right from the very beginning.

Today, we will look at how God's big plan works in our lives. We will look at a deep mystery. We will see how God is fully in control, yet we still get to make our own real choices. We will explore this through two main points.

GOD'S UNFOLDING STRATEGY

In the New Testament of the Bible, we see a beautiful picture of God's eternal plan. The Apostle Paul wrote a famous letter called Romans. In Romans 8:28-30, Paul lays out a clear path. Bible scholars like to call this path the "Golden Chain of Salvation." A chain is strong. If the links are locked together, the chain will not break. God's plan is a chain that cannot be broken.

Let us look closely at the five links in God's divine sequence.

Romans 8:28-30

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 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. (Romans 8:28-30, ESV)

First, God foreknew us. This does not just mean God knew facts about us. It means He deeply knew and loved us first. Before the stars were even in the sky, God had you on His mind. He loved you before you were even born.

Second, God predestined us. That is a very big word. It simply means God drew a map for our lives. He looked ahead and set a goal for us. That goal is for us to become more and more like His Son, Jesus. He planned our final stop.

Third, God called us. Imagine getting a special letter in the mail. The letter is an invite to a royal dinner. God did this for us. He sent out a call to our hearts. He invited us to leave our old lives and join His family.

Fourth, God justified us. Picture a quiet courtroom. You are standing before a judge. You have done wrong things. But then, the judge drops his hammer. He looks at you and declares that you are "not guilty." Because of what Jesus did, God clears our record. He makes us perfectly right with Him.

Fifth, God glorified us. This is the final link. It is a promise about tomorrow. God guarantees our future in heaven. Paul speaks about it like it has already happened. That is how sure God's promise is.

Salvation is a divine plan from start to finish. It starts in the deep past. It ends in the deep future. The Apostle Peter wrote about this too. In 1 Peter 1:1-2, he calls believers "exiles." That means people living far from their true home. But he says they were chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." You are not an accident. You were chosen.

We see the best Bible illustration of God's plan on the darkest day in human history. Think about the day Jesus died on the cross. His friends were crying. The sky turned black. It looked like evil had won. It looked like a terrible mistake. But it was not a tragedy that caught God off guard.

In Acts 2:23, the Bible says Jesus was handed over "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." God took the absolute worst thing that ever happened—the death of His perfect Son—and used it to save the whole world. If God can take the darkest Friday and turn it into Easter Sunday, He can handle the hard parts of your life, too.

OUR FREEDOM AND GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Now, we must ask a very hard question. It is a question that smart people have debated for hundreds of years. Here is the question: If God already knows exactly what I am going to do tomorrow, do I really have free will? Am I just a robot acting out a script?

Throughout history, Christians have tried to solve this great mystery. They usually fall into two main groups.

The Arminian View: One group says that for humans to be truly free, God just looks into the future. It is like God has a giant telescope. He looks ahead to see what we will freely choose to do. Then, He makes His plans based on what He sees. They argue that if God forced us to choose, then our freedom is no longer real freedom.

The Calvinist View: The other group says that God knows the future because He planned the future. They believe God's knowledge is based totally on His own powerful choices. He wrote the script, and He controls every single detail of what happens.

So, how do we balance this? How can God be in total control, while we still make real, meaningful choices?

There is a very helpful middle ground. We can believe that God is completely powerful, even within the freedom of His creatures. God is so great, and His mind is so huge, that He can allow us to make real choices. Yet, He is perfectly certain that His loving plan will succeed. Let us use a contemporary illustration to understand this.

Imagine a grand master chess player. This master has studied chess his whole life. He sits down to play a game against a young beginner. Though the rookie has complete control within the rules to move his pieces, the master has complete control of the process.

God is the grand master of the universe. He gives us real freedom to live our lives. We make real choices every single day. But God is so big and so smart that His ultimate plan of love cannot be defeated.

You do not have to worry about tomorrow. You are deeply known. You are perfectly loved. The Grand Master is watching over the board, and His great strategy will never fail.