

The Golden Chain of Salvation
Romans 8:29-30
October 15, 2020

Review

Chs 5-8 The gospel and the sure hope it gives

8:18-39 Assurance of hope

18-25 Suffering with Christ in the present age is nothing in comparison to the future glorious revealing of the sons of God, that will be accompanied by the liberation of the creation from its bondage to corruption. Like the creation we groan in the pains of childbirth, as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies. We were given this hope when we were saved, and we wait for it with perseverance.

26-27 The Spirit helps us, who do not know what to pray for, by interceding for us according to the will of God.

28 God causes all things to work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

Question: What stands out to you as you read this passage?

Question: How can this passage strengthen a believer's assurance of salvation?

29 “For”

1. Connects back to the great promise in verse 28
2. Verses 29-30 tell us that all things work together for good because of an unbreakable chain of God’s saving work in which He is fulfilling His purpose

These verses concern a “golden chain” of five links that tie together what God has done in eternity past for our salvation, with what He will do to complete our salvation in the future.

This unbreakable golden chain is the bedrock of our assurance of salvation and our “hope of the glory of God” (5:2).

This golden chain reveals that God is the author of our salvation from beginning to end. Consequently...

1. We cannot humanly undo what God has divinely done
2. Every person who is genuinely saved is eternally secure
3. All of God's elect will be saved to the uttermost

1. Foreknowledge

29 “those whom he foreknew”

The most critical link to understand correctly

In Greek literature, the term usually means “to know beforehand”

- **2 Pet. 3:17** “You therefore, beloved, **knowing this beforehand**, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.”

But the common meaning does not hold when God is the subject

- **Acts 2:23** “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and **foreknowledge** of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

The background of the term is found in the OT, where for God “to know” a person often speaks of having a relationship with them or setting His covenantal love upon them, and to know people beforehand often has the idea of choosing them by grace.

- **Gen. 4:1** “Now Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”
- **1 Sam. 2:12** “Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not **know** the LORD.”
- **Gen. 18:17–19** “The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For **I have chosen [literally, ‘known’] him**, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD...”
- **Jer. 1:5** “Before I formed you in the womb I **knew** you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
- **Hos. 13:4–5** “But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior. It was I who **knew** you in the wilderness, in the land of drought;”

- **Amos 3:2** “You only have I **known** of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

We see the same ideas in these occurrences of “foreknow/foreknowledge”:

- **1 Pet. 1:20** “He [Christ] **was foreknown** before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you”
- **Rom. 11:1–2** “I ask, then, has God rejected his people [Israel]? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he **foreknew**.”

Our text does not speak of God foreknowing the faith of believers, but foreknowing people, and speaks of God sovereignly setting his covenantal love on His elect ones, choosing them for a relationship with Himself.

1. The timing of this is explicitly stated in **Eph. 1:4a** “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,”
2. Choosing by grace (Rom 11:5)

2. Predestination

29 “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son”

In eternity past

Includes conformity to the image of God’s Son in...

1. The inner man
 - **1 John 3:2** “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
2. The outer man
 - **Phil. 3:20–21** “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

God predestined us to be recreated and fashioned into the image of Christ

God begins bringing this to pass in sanctification

- **2 Cor. 3:18** “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

God will complete this good work in glorification

29 “in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

1. God’s purpose in salvation is to glorify Christ
2. In that culture, the firstborn was singled out for special honor
3. Here, “firstborn” speaks of Christ’s preeminence over, and solidarity with, the adopted sons of God who will most certainly be conformed to the image of Christ
4. Reminds us of 8:17
5. Christ will be glorified by having His image imprinted on all the elect, showing that they have been brought into God’s family

3. Calling

30 “And those whom he predestined he also called”

More literal, **NKJV** “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called”

Emphasizes the exact correspondence between those whom God predestined and those whom God calls

1. Each of the links in the golden chain is connected in this way
2. God’s purpose is completely and precisely fulfilled

This link moves from eternity past into history

Mentioned in 8:28

God sovereignly works through the gospel message in the soul, effectually summoning the sinner to come God through Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-39)

Comparable to Christ calling Lazarus forth from the tomb

2 Th. 2:13–14 “But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. **To this he called you through our gospel**, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Tim. 1:9 “who saved us and **called us to a holy calling**, not because of our works but **because of his own purpose and grace**, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,”

God’s calling sovereignly brought us to faith in Christ and repentance of sin

4. Justification

30 “and those whom he called he also justified”

Declared righteous as a gift of God’s grace, received by faith, given on the basis of the finished work of Christ (3:21-4:25)

5. Glorification

30 “and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

The completion of God’s saving work in our lives that He will accomplish at the return of Christ

Past tense, like the verbs in all the other links of this golden chain

1. Absolute certainty
2. Our glorification is in the purpose of God, and that means it is as good as done

Douglas Moo: “Here Paul touches on the ultimate source of the assurance that Christians enjoy, and with it he brings to a triumphant climax his celebration of the ‘no condemnation’ that applies to every person in Christ.”¹

Conclusion

Paul has charted the course from God’s foreknowledge of the elect in eternity past, all the way to their future glorification, and shown us that it is all of Him.

None of these links can be broken!

As believers, we can know that God’s good purpose will be accomplished in our lives, because it is God Himself who accomplishes it!

It is for us to trust God completely with our salvation.

This golden chain is meant to strengthen the believer’s assurance of salvation, and heighten his hope.

Paul is heading toward **11:36** “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 536.