

**Series: Gospel 101: Mastering the Basics for Life and Godliness**  
**Sermon Title: The Golden Chain**  
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**Scripture Text: Romans 8:28-30**

## Introduction

We are continuing our series entitled *Gospel 101*. I consider this message in itself as critical for every Christian to understand. That's because it provides God's people with the ultimate comfort. If you want an anchor for your soul this morning look no further than these verses. These verses are a shelter for the afflicted. That being said, these verses are not without controversy. I am going to ask you this morning not just to think with your head but allow the Spirit to speak these words to your heart. It is not surprising that these words have become controversial so that many people are turned off and don't experience the power of these verses. I am praying you will derive the full comfort that these verses provide.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his 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. <sup>30</sup>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

Let me ask you this question this morning: *Are you a 'glass half-empty' person or are you a 'glass half-full' person?* That is a common way of asking people if they are naturally optimists or pessimists. I admit that I tend to be a 'glass-half empty' kind of person. I wish I wasn't but I am (I generally see the problems and difficulties before the opportunities). It drives me nuts when I hear people say in the midst of the most difficult circumstances, "*Don't worry; everything will work out fine*" (Have you heard that?). Some people are just natural optimists, believing that everything always turns out best. *The problem with that though is that it just isn't true* (everything doesn't always turn out fine). The truth is, there are children who are struck with cancer, drug addicts who come from good homes, soldiers who come back from war with one limb. We know of countless tragedies and people who are suffering worldwide.

Yet still, we often repeat to our children that everything somehow will work out fine. By the way, this sentiment is not new—the Greeks and the Romans said something similar to their children. Now I might have to change because here in vs. 28, it would appear that Paul is a *'glass half-full'* guy with his statement that "all things are working together for good." But that is not the case. There is so much more here than just natural optimism. *He is saying that for a certain group there is the absolute assurance that everything that happens to them, even the bad things, are working out for their ultimate good.*

If we look at the context of vs. 28 we see that Paul has been talking about living by the Spirit in the midst of suffering and pain. Paul himself was no stranger to suffering; he had several near-death experiences, beatings, imprisonments and persecutions to knock the stuffings out of any natural optimism he might have. Yet in the midst of clear statements that those who live in the Spirit in this age will suffer, Paul makes statements that are either the unfounded sentiments of an optimist or divine revelation offering believers the ultimate comfort.

## II. All Things are Working Together for the Good (vs. 28)

Let's unpack this morning this fantastic statement, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." First of all (as I just said), it is a promise that is only true for a certain group (those who love God, who are called according to his purpose). For them, Paul says, God is so working that he is ever guiding all things so that they work for their good. He is not saying that everything that is happening to us is *good* but that God in his sovereignty uses them for our good. That is why God's sovereignty is so important to grasp (God is in control). We have to know who is in control of our lives.

Secondly, he tells us *what the good is* that he is working all things for in the next verse—"to be conformed to the image of his Son" (see vs. 29). That means that He is using the things that happen to me for my ultimate good (though it may not be for my immediate good). When I lost *my house in Florida*, God used it for my good in that he showed me pockets of covetousness in my heart). Think of Joseph in the Old Testament. If you had asked Joseph when his brothers tossed him in the pit if that was good he would have said no. If you asked him if it was good to be sold into slavery, if it was good to be falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, to be forgotten so that he languished in prison, he would have said no to all these things. But at the end, when he revealed himself to his brothers, he could say that it has all worked for his good. **How can we know that it's true** (that God is working all things together for good for us?).

## III. The Golden Chain (vs. 29)

The opening word in vs. 29 sums it up. Notice the word "*for*". "For" means 'because' and is a purpose statement. In other words, all things are working together for God for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose *because* of what God has done. What is it that God has done? *He has set in motion five acts of unspeakable love in order to make us his own*. Some scholars referred to this as the 'Golden Chain' in the sphere of human salvation covering from beginning to the end.

If we ask the question from vs. 28, "*How do we know that all things are working together for the good,*" the answer is, God has **foreknown** us, **predestined** us, **called** us, **justified** us and **glorified** us. This is salvation from the divine side of things. There is the human side but this is the divine side of what it looks like to be "called according to his purpose." Let's look carefully at each one of these and savor each.

### **For those whom He foreknew**

'Foreknew' is a word derived from two Greek words meaning 'to know beforehand'. 'Ginosko' is the basic Greek word for "knowing" or "to know". When the Greek prefix "*pro*" is placed before, it simply means to "*know beforehand*". Some teach that this is simply teaching that God knows all people beforehand. The problem with that is this verse is not talking about the fact that God knows all people beforehand but that he knew beforehand a particular group characterized by '*those*'. Others teach that this simply means that God foreknows something *specific* about believers. Perhaps he foreknows their moral state (that they are really good people). Or maybe he foresees their '*faith*'. (God chooses them on the basis of their faith). The problem with this is Paul does not say he knew anything about them but rather that he *knew* them.

Also, he says clearly that it is only *some* individuals that have been foreknown and predestined and called and justified and glorified. Another thing is the word *foreknew* itself. It occurs six times in the New

Testament and 2 of them mean to know something beforehand (such as when Paul's nephew knew beforehand of the plot to kill Paul). The other four carry with it the idea of 'entering a relationship with' or 'to choose, or elect' (This means to know in an "intimate way"). This is the way it is used of God's relationship to Israel in the Old Testament. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" Amos 3:2 (God surely knew about the nations).

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" (Jer. 1). "Depart from me you workers of iniquity, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). This can't mean that God didn't know about them; but it does mean that he never knew them intimately. What did he do for those whom he foreknew?

### **He Also predestined**

Go back in your mind to eternity past. God the Father looked at his Son and said, "Son, I have a plan to give you a unique bride, a companion for you forever. I am going to handpick those who will be in my bride. You will become a Man and at a certain point in history, you will die for them. Your death will provide them the power to become conformed to your image and likeness.

You will be unique, the Firstborn and they will all be in the family. That's what Paul means by this term "pre-destined". The Greek verb means exactly what it says: 'destined': "to have a destination in mind". In this case it means that God has purposed to bring every one of his kids to a certain destination—**absolute conformity to the Son of God**. When you add the prefix 'pro', it means to 'ordain or destine beforehand' *proorizoë*. You're not sitting here this morning because you chose to but because God included you in his great salvation before the foundation of the world.

### **He also called (vs. 30)**

This is the moment in the Golden Chain where it intersects our actual history. The first two in the Golden Chain occur before we are actually around. But in a certain moment of time those who are foreknown and predestined are actually called or summoned by God. These links in this chain are carefully built upon one another (there isn't some who are predestined who aren't called). How does God call his own? He calls *through the preaching of the Gospel*.

This can't be just those who hear the Gospel for if calling meant hearing the Gospel physically it would mean that everyone who heard the Gospel was justified. It means that God uses the preaching of the Gospel to call those who he has foreknown and predestined. Calling in Scripture is not used primarily of being called to a certain ministry but the calling which comes to those who are being saved. At the time of my own calling, some of my friends heard words when we first heard the Gospel but I heard the call of the Savior.

### **Were justified (vs. 30)**

We met with this doctrine throughout the first four chapters. From the divine side of thing, he justifies us but that doesn't negate the fact that we must respond in faith. It is God who justifies but it is the person who believes who is justified. Kelly talked about this great doctrine last week. It's a legal term signifying that as far as God is concerned, we have been totally justified from all the charges due to us as transgressors of the law.

### **We were glorified (vs. 30)**

What is amazing about this statement is it is the only one of the five which has not yet occurred. Yet, Paul is so sure that it will happen that he uses the past tense as if it already has! What exactly does it mean that "those whom he justified he also glorified?" This is one of the most important doctrines in the Bible which has been almost totally lost. The focus today is much more on 'going to a place' rather than 'getting to a place'. The Bible focus is on 'getting to a place'; to what happens to us at the end of the

process. It is called glorification and it is the ultimate step in the Golden Chain when God transforms the body of our weakness into the body of his glory. Paul doesn't mention it in the Chain but between justification and glorification is a process called 'sanctification'. It is the slow and tedious process of being delivered from the power of sin in our lives and for us to achieve it we must suffer much. We are being delivered from the power of sin but not from the presence of sin. That will only occur when the Lord Jesus appears and we are glorified.

*"He will transform our "lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Phil 3:21). Just think; your body with all its aches and pains, with its tiredness, illnesses, and just getting old will be totally transformed. It will have to be because of one statement found in the last chapter of the Bible—"they shall see his face." No one in the Bible could see his face and live. The only way that could happen is by receiving new bodies.*

### **Conclusion**

Just think of how loved you are right now. You were known in Father's mind before the foundation of the world and he launched his plan to bring you to glory. In a moment in time he actually called you to Himself through regeneration (we will be talking about that in the next part of this series). Then, in that moment, he totally and completely justified you. And now in your life, he is working to deliver you from the power of sin so that you might be prepared **TO BE GLORIFIED**.

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### ***The questions which follow are for House Church Group Discussion.***

1. How does God's sovereignty relate to our understanding of Romans 8:28?
2. What is the "good" Paul refers to in Romans verse 28? How does this related to our understanding of personal trials and even the trials of those in the Bible? (Joseph for example).
3. What are the 5 links in the Golden Chain of Salvation?
4. In Verse 29, what does "for" mean? What has God done?
5. What does "foreknow" mean? How does this apply to God's chosen people in the Old Testament?
6. In the Golden Chain of salvation what has transpired before our existence? What has happened during our lifetime? What is yet to come?
7. Why does Paul refer to glorification in the past, when it is actually yet to be realized?