

# God's Unbreakable Chain

## Romans 8:29-30

January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010



Over the years, I have discovered that one of our most valuable tools on the farm is a chain. It is a very valuable asset. Many times over the years my dad has said, "Ricky, go get the chain." We have more than one chain so, depending on what particular job we are going to do, I usually know which chain to get. When Dad tells me to go get a chain, I need to get the chain that is sufficient to do whatever job we are doing. Normally, when we use a chain, the reason we need it falls under one of three categories.

### **1. To chain things down**

Sometimes we use a chain to chain things down. We put a tractor on a trailer and chain it to the trailer because we do not want the tractor to fall off while it is being moved.

### **2. To get things out**

Sometimes we use a chain to get things out of something. For example, a truck is stuck in mud in a field or creek. So Dad will tell me to go get the chain to use it to get the truck out. We hook the chain to something sufficient to pull it out.

### **3. To pull something through**

At other times, we use the chain to pull something through something. For example, something is at one place, and we want to get it to another place and there is something in between. On its own power, it cannot get through what is in between. So we need to use a chain to move it through. We hook it to something that is sufficient in order to get through what is in the middle to the place we want to move it to.

Your salvation and especially your security, rests on a chain; a chain that depends on God's divine activity to get you through whatever you find yourself in.

#### **Scripture**

***"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."***

#### **The What, the Who, the Why**

Romans 8 has been, and still is, dealing with the thought of suffering. It began by saying that those of us who are in Christ walk according to the Spirit of God. Because we walk according to the Spirit of God, we will live a victorious Christian life. But it troubles Christians who are living a victorious Christian life that they are not exempt from suffering. So Paul, in the midst of victory, deals with suffering. In verses 18-30, he begins to teach that God has ordained suffering in the life of a believer. He not only allows suffering, He actually takes it and uses it to guarantee that He will conform you into the image of Jesus Christ. In the midst of our suffering, he tells us all things work together for good. I don't know about you, but I have been

is some situations sometimes where I did not have a clue how this would turn out for my good. Yet, the Bible says all things work together for good. In verse 29, that little word, "for", is tying what Paul is going to say to what he has just said. So when you read verses 29-30, remember this statement: these verses tell us the *why* of the *what*, for the *who* of Romans 8:28.

- **The What**

The *what* is that "...all things work together for good..." In the midst of suffering, no matter what kind I find myself in, I have the promise from God that all things work together for my good. That particular thing that I am suffering may not be good, but God has promised that when put with everything else that will happen in my life, all of it will work together for my good.

- **The Who**

This is crucial, and it may shock some of you, but not everyone who lives on the planet has the promise that all things work together for good. Everyone on the planet is not covered under Romans 8:28. There is only one group of people on the earth that has this promise. The *who* are "...those who love God..." Not any god, but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tells us that the people are "those who love God..." and "...those who are called according to His purpose."

When we think of salvation, let's think about a coin. It has two sides, but I find it difficult to look at both sides at the same time. Sometimes, we flip a coin and decide who wins or loses by calling heads or tails. We use a coin toss to begin a ballgame to see who goes first. When the Bible presents salvation, you have to remember that there is only one salvation, but there are two sides to it. There is a human side of salvation and a divine side of salvation. In this passage, you see both sides of the coin. The human side of salvation is "those who love God." The divine side of salvation is "those

*who are called according to His purpose.*" I personally believe that if you do not get this next point you could seriously misinterpret this passage. I am also mindful that if I am wrong, then I am misinterpreting the passage. It sounds to me like if the Bible is going to teach that all things work together for my good as I am called according to His purpose, then I am eternally secure, in spite of all of my suffering. In other words, if I love God and I have been called according to His purpose, when I find myself suffering from divorce, or a loved one has cancer, or death of a child, no matter what situation I find myself in; if I am a true believer in God, none of those things will ever cause me to lose my faith, quit believing in Jesus, or lose my salvation.

Now, if I love God and am in a relationship with Him, but something happens to cause me to quit loving, believing, or trusting in Him and can be lost again, then the Bible cannot say all things work together for good, right? I mean, whatever caused me to quit trusting and being saved, it just derailed my life and it will not turn out good, it will turn out eternally bad. I will spend eternity separated from God forever. Does that make sense to anyone; do you understand that thought process?

Romans 8:28 teaches that a true person who loves God has a lifetime guarantee about his salvation. In spite of all he finds himself in, God will see him through it and guarantees that one day he will be just like Jesus Christ. That was God's purpose for saving him in the first place.

- **The Why**

Now mostly, we like the *what*. For example, I have a laptop and I don't really care what is going on inside of it, I just open it up and trust that it works, and it does. I just like the fact that my *what*, my laptop, works. When it doesn't work, I have to call someone who knows how to find out why it isn't working. Sometimes I wish I knew what they knew, because while I know the *what*, they know the *why*.

The reason we have verses 29-30 is because Paul wanted you to know the *why* of the *what*, for the *who*. This will be tedious, but stick with me. This is going to teach *why* God guarantees people are eternally secure in Christ and cannot ever be separated from the love of God in Christ. Verses 31-39 tells us that in spite of everything we find ourselves in, none will ever be victorious over us and separate us from God. Paul is talking about security. Remember the two sided coin as Paul shows us why we are secure.

In verses 29-30, Paul will mention five actions, or chain of events, and each are of God and God only. He will not talk about the human part of salvation for a long while. This could make us uncomfortable, but you have to remember that the divine side of salvation does not negate, minimize, or trivialize the human side of salvation. The Bible chooses from time to time to only look at one side of salvation for a purpose. It does not mean there isn't another side. But you have to be careful, because if we always try to bring in one side when God is talking about the other side, we will greatly misinterpret and change what the writer is trying to convey. The writer is trying to teach that you are eternally secure in the midst of your suffering because God has guaranteed by a chain of events that He will get you from where you are, through whatever stands between you and Him, to stand on the other side, and one day you will be just like Jesus Christ! The reason he doesn't talk about the human side of salvation here is because it is not where your security depends or rests. Your security rests on the divine side of salvation. The human side of salvation is a response to God, who is the divine side of salvation. But our security doesn't rest on our response; our security rests on God's side of salvation. But remember, one does not negate, minimize, or trivialize the other.

We are all prejudice toward this passage one way or the other. We will get to the human side of salvation in Romans chapter 10, but chapters 8 and 9 will primarily deal with the divine side of salvation. It will cause tension and questions, like how can both of those be true? It is true because the Bible teaches both are true. There is both a divine side and a human side. God's choice of you in Christ in no way negates, minimizes, or trivializes your

choice of Him. Your choice of Him is a real meaningful choice that you make! But your security, in the midst of your suffering, does not rest on your response to God, it rests on what God has already said is true of you.

## The Chain of Events in the *Why*

Now, there are five actions or chain of events. But who are "*For those whom...*" in the beginning of verse 28? This is a personal, plural pronoun, meaning there is more than one. "*Those whom*" refers to a group of people. But remember, you can never have a group of people without having individuals within the group, so it really doesn't matter if you make this individual persons or one group of people.

- 1. Foreknew**
- 2. Predestined**
- 3. Called**
- 4. Justified**
- 5. Glorified**

The certain group of people, or certain persons who God "*foreknew*", He also "*predestined*." Whom He "*predestined*", He also "*called*." And whom He "*called*", He also "*justified*." And whom He "*justified*", He also "*glorified*." Paul is presenting a chain of events and when one event happens, it will lead to the next event. And when that event happens, it leads to the next, and so on. That is a chain of events.

This is my interpretation:



**Foreknew**  **Predestined**  **Called**  **Justified**  **Glorified**



The subject of those actions is God. Each of these actions is in the aorist tense, which talks about punctiliar action. It is not an action that continues, but an action that just happens. All five of these actions are in the same tense. Do you see why you are secure in Christ? If God "*foreknew*" you, He "*predestined*" you. If He "*predestined*" you, He "*called*" you. If He "*called*" you, He "*justified*" you. And if He "*justified*" you, He has already "*glorified*" you, even though you haven't gotten there yet. God can speak of something in the future that is certain in His mind as already taking place.

What if one of these actions could not or did not happen? Our chain would be broken...



If some of the people who God "*foreknew*" do not get "*predestined*", or if some of those who are "*predestined*" do not get "*called*", or so on, there will be broken links in our chain. Would you use a broken chain in your work? Of course not, there would be no security in a chain that had broken links. With all that is in me as a teacher of God's Word, I do not believe the Apostle Paul gives this *why* believing that any one of these links could be broken. If any of them could be broken, it would undermine the teaching that "*all things work together for good.*" I know that some of these terms scare people to death and make them run from the truth of Scripture. But let me caution you that when you minimize these and base them on the human side of salvation, you undermine the biblical teaching of the eternal security of a believer. The human side and the divine side of salvation are both true, but in this passage Paul is not basing security on the human side. He is basing security on the divine side of salvation. The only way we have eternal security as a believer is if this chain is true. Everyone he "*foreknew*", He "*predestined.*" Everyone He "*predestined*", He also "*called.*" Everyone He "*called*", He also "*justified.*" Everyone He "*justified*", He "*glorified.*" Paul is trying to say that those whom God "*foreknew*" will get there! No matter what you find yourself in, God will never leave you there

and it will not cause you to turn your back on Him. You will arrive at glorification just like Jesus Christ one day!

This fall we were farming in Craven's Bay. We had a truck loaded down with around 1000 pounds of grain. Because of the wet fall, I had to get the chain to make it through the little swamp. Dad didn't want the semi to try to get through that swamp to the road. We got the 4-wheel drive tractor and hooked the chain to the semi. I had no doubt the tractor could get through the other side, but now it was hooked to a truck and I was worried if the chain would hold. I voiced my doubts to my dad. I don't know why I argue with my dad on the farm; he always wins, he is always right! Dad said, "Son, it will hold." And it held. My dad used a chain to get that truck through what it had to go through to get to the other side so we could get it where we wanted it.

God has a chain of events that He has guaranteed will come to pass! This passage is not teaching that God wants to get you out of something. We are so conditioned to believe that salvation is always *from* something. Yes, there was a day when God hooked you to His Son and rescued you from sin because He wanted to get you out of sin. But when He took you out of sin, He never made an agreement with you that He would take you from suffering. As a matter of fact, He has promised you that if you are a believer, you will have suffering. God doesn't view this passage from our side of believing, or He could have started with belief and told us we are made right with Him and nothing could separate us from Him. He could have done that and it would have been true! That is what most of us hang on to. We start with ourselves when the gospel breaks into our lives. We get saved and know we can't lose our salvation because that is what someone told us, which is the last two parts of the chain; those that are "*justified*" are "*glorified*." But there is something before that, because your salvation didn't start when you were in sin, it started in eternity past. It doesn't stop in the present history of you; it is guaranteed that it will continue on to eternity future. So, in the midst of suffering, you cling to what God, who "*justified*" you, has promised. He will "*glorify*" you, because



he "*called*" you. He "*called*" you because He "*predestined*" you, and He "*predestined*" you because He "*foreknew*" you. He "*foreknew*" me before I ever even was...what a God! My salvation comes, not with a limited guarantee; it has a lifetime guarantee because I am the recipient of a chain of events of a holy and just God. This is not just for my salvation, but every moment of my life rests on God being true to His Word.