

# God's Unbreakable Chain

## The Third Link

### Romans 8:29-30

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010



Several years ago, Celisa decided that while she was getting everything done in the morning, it would be a really big help if I could learn to fix breakfast. She didn't mean pouring milk in a bowl of cereal, but actually preparing a hot meal. The first hot meal that she decided I could fix was oatmeal. She put out and measured all of the ingredients for our oatmeal. She told me to memorize these ingredients for the next time. She showed me the Quaker oatmeal box and said to follow the directions on the box. I followed the directions a few times, but did not realize how important it was to do everything in order. One morning I was in a hurry and wasn't paying attention to what I was doing. I got all of my ingredients out and put all of my water and milk in the pot. I turned the heat on and hurriedly put my oats in the water before it had begun to boil. I also put my butter and sugar in and began to stir. I stirred and I stirred and I stirred...needless to say, it took a long time before the oatmeal ever boiled. When I served that oatmeal, it was not worth eating! If you ever fix oatmeal, I encourage you to get the water boiling before you add the oats. Have you ever tried to fry French fries in grease before it got hot enough? I don't advise that either!

As we read Romans 8:29-30, I have a lot of ingredients to share with you. I pray that I put the ingredients in the proper order so that it will make sense to you.

## Interlocking Links

Remember in review, this passage is teaching the *why* of the *what*, for the *who* of Romans 8:28. Verses 29-30 is teaching that the divine side of salvation guarantees that a believer in Jesus Christ is eternally secure, in spite of the suffering that he might find himself in. We know that for a believer, all things work together for his good because of the divine side of salvation. There is nothing that can ever cause a believer not to be just like God's Son Jesus Christ. Look at the chain again.



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



## 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.”*

You can look at this chain in two ways. You can look at it forward, starting with “*foreknew*”, or backward starting with “*glorified*.” Those He “*foreknew*”, He also “*predestined*.” Those He “*predestined*”, He “*called*.” Those He “*called*”, He also “*justified*.” Those He “*justified*”, He also “*glorified*.” I personally believe the Bible is teaching this as an unbroken

chain of events on God's side of salvation. Because they cannot be broken, we are eternally secure. If this chain of events can be broken, then we are not eternally secure in our salvation.

Let's look at it backwards:



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



God "*glorified*" those He "*justified*." He "*justified*" the ones He "*called*." He "*called*" the ones He "*predestined*." He "*predestined*" the ones He "*foreknew*." You can look at it forward or backward, but in order to be eternally secure, the chain must be unbroken. The Bible say that all things work together for good, but if one of these links can be broken, then that could not be true.

Whether looking at the chain forward or backward, "called" is in the center of the chain of events. Notice that it is interlocked, or linked, to predestination as well as justification. From beginning to end, "called" is preceded by "*predestined*", and followed by "*justified*." So in this unbroken chain of events, we have to look at it in context. I know some will struggle with this, but this is the Bible. It doesn't matter what we believe, it matters what the Bible teaches. We have to bring our way of thinking in line with the Scripture. As you look at this in the context, everyone that gets "*predestined*" gets "*called*." Everyone that gets "*called*" gets "*justified*", and justification means to be saved; to be made right with God. Every person that God has "predestined" to be like Christ will one day be saved. Every person that God calls will be saved, and your salvation rests on this being true. Let's look at the third link in the chain.

## Called

The Greek word that is translated "called" is the word **kaleo**. However, you would not see this in the Greek New Testament. You would see **ekalesen**, but **kaleo** is the root of **ekalesen**. When giving a definition of a Greek word, the root word is always given. It's like looking up a word in the dictionary and not understanding the full meaning until you look in the section that defines the root of the word. In the Greek dictionary, **kaleo** is 'to invite, to call, to summons, to welcome, or to appoint.'

When you look at the different definitions of this word, you have to fit it into the context of what you believe Paul is saying and how he may be using the word. In my opinion, many people make a grave mistake here and read the first definition, 'to invite', into this word because they have been conditioned to believe that. I believe that is a mistake. We have a saying on the farm that says, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." The reason a lot of people do not have confidence in this chain of events by God is because they believe the fulfillment of this chain is based on the human response, not the divine enacting of this chain. They see "called" as the weak link in the chain. Many would have the first two links unbroken, this link broken, and then the last two unbroken. If you see it that way, it will sooth your human conscience. You will think it's awesome and believe you have security. But you will completely wipe out that all things work together for good, in this context. I do not believe you can read Romans 8:30 and substitute the idea of 'invited' for "called." It does not fit into the context to say, *for those whom He predestined, He also invited, and those whom He invited, He also justified*. I believe the correct definition is 'to summon' or 'to call.' This is why most English Bibles do not translate the word as invited. Therefore, they use the word "called" because most understand there is something more than a mere invite by God going on.

I want to be clear; this passage is teaching the gospel is more than a mere invitation. In my mind, the word, "*called*", here would best be defined as: **The act of God whereby He enables and persuades a sinner to believe the gospel.**

This call is not a general call of the gospel; it is an effectual call of the gospel. In Matthew 22:1-14, the Bible uses *kaleo* six times in the message of the marriage feast. Four of those times, it is translated as invited. Two times it is translated as call. There is a clear teaching in this passage that there is a general call where God invites all to come to the feast, but no one wants to come. Finally in the end, a few do show up to the feast and the Bible makes the statement that "many are called, but few are chosen." In other words, many are invited to the feast, but few are chosen to come.

Now, in Romans 8:30, Paul is not referring to the general call of the gospel where man is just merely invited to come. This passage is teaching why believers come. Why do believers come to the gospel? It is because they were effectually called by God. In that calling from Him, He enabled and persuaded us to believe.

- **Preaching of the Gospel**

I believe in biblical predestination, single and positive predestination. I believe it so much that I would lay my life down for it. I will still fellowship with you if you do not believe this, but I believe it with all of my heart. But I get asked why I preach or go to Brazil to preach if I believe in predestination? I assume when I get asked that question that they believe predestination means there is no need to preach the gospel. If God has already determined who will be saved and be like Jesus, then the preaching of the gospel is really irrelevant, right? It has no real significance. I can understand why some would ask me questions like that. But I preach the gospel, and believe it is consistent with the doctrine of predestination, because no one gets saved based on predestination by itself, just as no one gets saved based on God's foreknowledge by itself. God's foreknowing and predestining took place in eternity past before He

ever created the world. That blows my mind...But there is a link between those God predestined and those He saved. That link is calling. This is talking about the divine side of salvation because it is talking about our security. But as humans, we cannot just rest in that. We also have to bring the human side in, right? Now, Paul doesn't bring the human side in here because he is perfectly confident in the God he serves, and I assume Paul understands what he is writing about! So, if we were going to insert the human side of salvation into this chain, we would do it right here. We know the Bible teaches that not all people get saved because all do not believe the gospel. We also know they cannot believe the gospel until they hear it. So the Bible is assuming the human side here. But this isn't about the human side; it is about the divine side. But again, the divine side never negates, minimizes, or trivializes the human side. I preach the gospel because **God calls those He has predestined through the preaching of the gospel**. God does not call anyone He has predestined until the gospel is preached. Let me give you some Bible for this.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 says:

"For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake."

Now remember in Matthew 22, the master of the wedding feast sent word that it was ready and invited people to come, but no one wanted to come! There was nothing in that word, or call, that caused people to want to quit doing what they were doing and come to the feast. Here, Paul said that he knows the Thessalonian believers have been chosen by God to be saved because when he preached the gospel it didn't just come in mere word. Paul told the Thessalonian Church that there was not just a general call among them. When the word came to them, there was power and the Holy Spirit and full conviction!

- **The Work of the Holy Spirit**

Isn't that what happened in your life when you got saved? Do you believe you came to faith in Jesus Christ on your own, or do you believe you came to faith because of the work of the Holy Spirit? You are resisting something that experientially you know is true. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says when the lawless one is revealed, many will be deceived by him because they do not believe the truth. Therefore, God will grant them to be deceived by the lawless one. But then in verse 13, he said:

"We ought to all give thanks to God for you..."

You see, he is contrasting the group who does not believe the gospel. But he said, you aren't like them and we should thank God you aren't. He doesn't give them credit for believing, he gives it to God.

Then he said:

"...brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved..."

In other words, God chose you to be saved. The phrase, "as the firstfruits", is translated in the KJV, "as from the beginning." In the Greek manuscripts, we are not sure which way this should be. You could say, from the beginning, God chose you to be saved, and that would match Romans 8. But the ESV says:

"...because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

- **Belief in the Truth**

God chose you to be saved. But in reality, He brought salvation to you by the Holy Spirit doing a work of conviction and setting you apart, and you believing the truth that Jesus died for you on a cross.

Then in 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15, he says:

"To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter."

"To this" either modifies "belief" or "sanctification" and "belief", since "and" connects them together. In other words, you, who have been chosen to be saved, were "called" to this: the Spirit setting you apart, and to believing the truth through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of Jesus.

This is so clear to me. I preach the gospel because, on the human side of salvation, I do not know who is going to believe. Even if you do not believe the way I do, you do not know who will be saved when you share the gospel. So, if you do not know who is going to be saved, why do you tell them? It is because you don't believe they can be saved until you tell them. It isn't your business to know who will be saved. On the human side, your business is to tell them! If you believe in total free will and do not believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation, the only reason you preach the gospel is because you believe people cannot be saved unless they hear the gospel.

But, I believe there is also a divine side of salvation. On the human side, I do not know who will be saved, so I preach the gospel. On the divine side, I do not know who God has predestined to be like Jesus, so I preach the gospel. Even though I believe in predestination, I still preach the gospel. I preach, not because I don't know who will be saved, but because I know that no one can be saved until gospel is preached. But in the preaching of the gospel, I know it is not left up to me to convince someone to be saved!

## **Effectual Call**

When I preach the gospel, there is an effectual call that goes out and God enables and persuades sinners to believe what He did for them on the

cross! Do not let anyone tell you that someone is saved only because they were elected or chosen or predestined; that all took place in eternity past. I believe what I am teaching perfectly lines up with that doctrine. This doctrine tells why you come to faith in Jesus Christ. Some wonder if this is just a Pauline doctrine, because Jesus taught that many are called but few are chosen. They do not think He taught anything like this, but He did. John 6:44 says:

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.”

- **Drawn by the Father**

The word “draw” is the Greek word *helkuo*. It is translated in other places in the Bible by the word “drag.” It means ‘to woo.’ Now remember, I believe the call in Romans 8:30 is an act of God whereby He enables and persuades a sinner to believe the gospel. I hear people who disagree with me say that if I believe in an effectual call, then man doesn’t have a choice in his salvation. That is not true. I can understand why you might think that, but it is not true. You do have a choice in your salvation. Left on your own, you will never choose Jesus Christ. If that makes you mad, then just get mad. If you are self-righteous enough to believe that sin has not affected you completely, and as a sinner the first desire of your heart would be to trust in Jesus Christ, you do not understand yourself or the depravity the Bible teaches. No one had a problem when Paul said in the first chapter of Romans that there is none righteous, not even one, and none who seeks God. Your lost friends are out in the community minding their own business, doing what they want to do, and they have no thought of God. The only time they think of Him is when they get into trouble and want Him to rescue them. As soon as they get out of trouble and think it was God who got them out, they usually go back to doing exactly what they were doing before. They totally think about themselves. This is why no one came in the parable of the feast. People had more important things to do than come to the feast of the king.

- **Given to Jesus**

In John 6:35-37, Jesus teaches that if you believe in Him, you will never thirst or hunger because He is the Bread of life. But He said some of you do not believe. Jesus is talking about salvation when He said they would never thirst or hunger again. In verse 37, Jesus said:

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

“Cast out” is used in the Bible to mean that you are in. All that gets in, Jesus will never cast out, that is eternal security! But Jesus says all, not some that the Father gives to Him will come to Him. If you believe the Bible to be true, then absolutely all that the Father gives to Jesus will come to Him. But not all people come to Jesus. There is a group that God gives to Jesus, and that group comes to Him. Jesus said He would never cast them out. He said that was why He came into the world, so that they would see, and you would see, and believe in Him; and it is God’s will to believe in Him. Then He said, but you don’t believe. They began to grumble because He said He was the Bread from Heaven. Then He said that no one could come to Him unless God, who sent Him, draws Him, and He would raise them up on the last day. He is telling a group of people who do not believe in Him, who are bickering over Him, and He says look, don’t worry about this; you can’t come unless the Father draws you. Jesus is telling them why the group that God gives to Him comes to Him, and that is because God draws them. It is evident the Father was not drawing them.

## **Enabled and Persuaded**

I believe this is the same concept that Paul is teaching when He talks about God calling people to Jesus. Another word used in the Bible for “draws” besides *helkuo* is *suro*, which means ‘force is enacted.’ *Suro*, when used in the Bible, always says “drag.” It means someone made someone else do what they did not want to do. *Helkuo* can imply force,

but not necessarily. People who do not believe what I do think that I am saying God makes someone be saved when they don't want to be saved. He forces them, coerces them, and violates their will and freedom to choose. That is not true. God never forces Himself upon anyone. In the effectual call, God is not dragging people kicking and screaming to Jesus. That is not what God does. And there also are not people out there wanting to be saved that God will not save because He didn't predestine or elect them. That is not true either. When God saves, He steps into people's lives who have no desire at all to want Him. The Bible teaches the reason no one can come is because man is born dead in sin and separated from God; he is a sinner. Man in sin does not have a free will. He is not morally neutral. He still has the ability to choose, but he will always choose consistently with his nature and inclination, and a sinner loves to sin. He loves to put himself first and glorify himself. That is why sinners do not bow down to Jesus Christ. They would have to put Jesus first, and He messes up their little world and they do not want their little world messed up. That is why an effectual call is necessary in salvation.

Now, what does God do and how can He do it without violating my ability to choose? Now hear this, I do not believe in free will. Adam had a free will in the garden. He was free to choose either way he wanted. He was not disposed one way or the other. He could choose, not based on a nature or disposition, but you were not born that way. You were born with a nature to sin. You are still free to choose whatever you want, but you will choose consistently with your nature.

When I was in college I had to give a persuasion speech and get a certain grade to get a degree. They gave me a topic that people in the room did not believe. It was my job to persuade them I was right. I persuaded every one of them...hands down, after that speech, every one of them repented of all of their previous thinking! They didn't believe it before my speech, but they did after I delivered it. Now, I did not violate any of their abilities to make a choice. I persuaded them, I enabled them to believe.

A prime example is when Celisa and I first went out. Sometime later, she told me that after I left that night, she knew she wanted to marry me...Wow! She said, "At that moment, I set my covenant love of marriage upon you." On July 18<sup>th</sup> of that same year, I was a married man. Now, we are Scottish, and their tradition is that a woman can ask a man to marry her during a leap year, and Celisa spent months persuading me to marry her! Now, this analogy is not completely perfect with what God does. But the point is; I did not have to marry Celisa. When she persuaded me to marry her, she did not violate my sense of choice. She just opened my eyes to what a wonderful woman she was, and she wooed me to her.

That illustration does not even touch the drawing and effectual call of God, but it will do some justice to it. God does not break into your life and drag you to the cross. But there was a group of people that God set His covenant love upon before the foundation of the world. He determined they would be just like Jesus Christ, and there was a time when He broke into their life through the preaching of the gospel and He wooed them. He persuaded them; He enabled them to go from being dead in sin to being alive in Christ. In that process, He persuaded you, the sinner, to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. This is not a weak link in the chain. This tells you how God accomplished what He set out to do, which was to save you.

Now I am going to say this because I think I believe it, but I reserve the right to change my mind: I have never liked the term in reform theology, 'irresistible grace.' I believe that on the human side of salvation I can reject God's work in my life, but on the divine side, I will not. When the gospel broke into my life, I rejected Jesus several times. Was God ever worried that I would not believe the gospel? No, on the divine side God knew that while I could, I wouldn't. But the day came when He had fully enabled and persuaded me, and I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I take no credit for it; I give it all to Him.

How do you know if God has chosen you if you haven't been saved yet? How do you know if God is calling or drawing you? Do you sense the Holy

Spirit at work in you? If you do not, you need to realize there is nothing you can do on your own to be saved. I would get on my hands and knees and pray to God asking Him to break into my life with the truth of the gospel and save me. I promise you, on the authority of God's Word, He will; He absolutely will! While you may not feel chosen right now, you will be, because you are. If you disregard this message, you cannot blame God for not choosing or electing or calling you. The reason you do not get saved is because you do not want to get saved. You enjoy sin more than you enjoy God. If you will believe the gospel, God will save you.

So, I will preach the gospel. It is between God and you what you do with it. There is a human side, and I don't know who will believe. And there is a divine side, and I don't know who He has chosen, but the gospel will reveal it to them.