

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–5 ; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14

"The Divine Purpose"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans in order to read the Scripture for the message this morning, but since it's a rather brief section of three verses, I thought that it might be helpful for us read not only Romans 8:28-30, but several verse from two other places in order that you may see that the apostle sets forth here is not a unique or a strange things with the Apostle Paul. He teaches it other places as well. So let me turn to Romans 8:28-30, and I'll read the verses here, and then we'll turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. The apostle writes, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Now, let me just say one thing here. Many of you I know read the New American Standard Bible, and some of you read the New International Version, and you notice that in those versions the subject of work together, is God. The reason for that difference from the version that I have read is that some of the ancient manuscripts insert the word God here, and thus the all things become the object rather than the subject of work together. There are actually eight different ways to translate the two readings, and so it's a rather complicated textural problem. In my opinion, in this case texturally as well as otherwise, the Authorized Version reading is correct, and the New International version and the New American Standard Bible are wrong at this point, but ultimately the meaning is essentially the same, whether we read, "God works all things together for good." Or whether we read, "All things work together for good in accordance with God's purpose." Which is then set forth we arrive at essentially the same truth.

Verse 29 reads,

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Will you notice particularly the past tense of glorified? We might have expected the future. Turning now to Ephesians chapter 1, we notice the apostle preaches the same doctrine. He does use the term election here rather than foreknowledge and predestination, but he repeats predestination in the 5 verse. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 4 and verse 5, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Now, that clause or phrase is very important. This predestination is according to the good pleasure of his will. In other words it is a sovereign predestination. Now, we turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 in two verses 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 14, which have been called a miniature of Pauline theology. He apostle writes in 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 13 and verse 14:

"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: unto which he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

This morning when I came in and looked at the desk in the office, there was card from a listener on the radio, KRLD from Temple, Texas and the writer of this card says, "Dear, Dr. Johnson, I have recently found your program on KRLD, Dallas Sunday morning, and enjoy it immensely. I perceive you teach election, which few teach, and I believe. Anyhow I'd like your catalogue so I can order your cassettes. I want new ones to keep rather than circulating. Thank you and may God continue to bless your ministry the staff and family. In his amazing grace," and then the letter is signed by the individual.

I had another interesting letter this morning from a person who listens to our radio broadcast, and I thought that I would read that to you because there is something a little humorous about it. "Dear, Dr. Johnson, for the past few months, I have enjoyed listening to you on the radio each Sunday morning, and it has become a ritual to finish jogging by 8, listen to your preaching, then listen to the Lovers Lane Methodist radio service, and finally attend our St. Phillip Presbyterian church in Hurst." [Laughter] Well, he goes on to say some other things, but I am so happy that we have ecumenical listeners [Laughter] over the radio too. [Laughter]

The subject for this morning is The Divine Purpose, The Fountainhead of All Spiritual Blessing. When one comes to a passage such as Romans chapter 8 verse 28 through 30, and reads through it, there arises in his mind the question, should we preach the doctrine of election because it appears to be such a stumbling block to so many?

John Calvin, who was one of the greatest interpreters of the Bible down through the centuries, has some, I think, very profitable words to say concerning this. He says in one place in his *Institutes*, "There are others who are wishing to cure this evil all but require that every mention of predestination be buried. Indeed they teach us to avoid any question of it, as we would a wreath. Therefore we must guard against depriving believers of anything disclosed about predestination in Scripture. Lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit, or having published what it is in any way profitable to suppress."

Now, you can see that what Mr. Calvin says is that what we do when we do not preach the doctrines of predestination and election is in effect to say we scoff at the Holy Spirit. He has published revealed things that it would be more profitable for us to suppress. In another place he says, "They say that this whole discussion is dangerous for Godly minds, because it hinders exhortations, because it shakes faith, because it disturbs and terrifies the heart itself, but this is nonsense." Calvin says.

Augustine admits that for these reasons he was frequently charged with preaching predestination too freely, but as it was easy for him he overwhelmingly refuted the charge, and finally, Calvin, in the next page or so says, "Whoever then he heaps odium upon the doctrine of predestination openly reproaches God as if he had unadvisedly let slip something hurtful to the church." Can you image the Holy Spirit letting the doctrine of predestination and election slip, and allowing the writers of Holy Scripture in the Old

Testament and the New Testament to mention it even thought it's going to be very hurtful to the people of God? No, no, we must unfold what has been revealed. The secrets belong unto the Lord, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to his children. We not only may preach them, we must preach them.

Now, the apostle in Romans chapter 8, has brought us to the highest peak in salvation range. In verse 17, he had said, "And if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." There it is the highest peak in salvation range, Mt. Glory.

Now, since that time the apostle has been engaged in setting forth cheering provisions along the way because he unfolds after the mention of Mt. Glory that there is a long valley to be traversed before we reach it, and that valley is the Valley of Sufferings, but he's encouraged us by saying the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. That is to encourage us as we face going through the valley of suffering.

Now, he has also pointed out for us that the help of the Holy Spirit is on our side too, for he constantly prays for us. We do not know what to pray as we ought, but he prays with unuttered groanings, and his prayers Paul said, are always answered for they are made in accordance with the will of God, and as a comfort for us he says they're also prayers for the saints. In other words, God's interests are in the saints, the believers.

Now, in this section he encourages those who are going through the valley of suffering by pointing them to the great purpose of God, a five-fold chain of salvation foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification. God has trials for his saints, and those that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer affliction. Mr. Spurgeon pointed out that the Apostle Paul was a man of many trials. He went from one tribulation to another, for Christ's sake. He swam through many seas of affliction to serve the church.

He said, "I don't wonder that his epistles are often discourses upon the doctrine of foreknowledge and predestination and eternal love, because these are a rich cordial for a fainting spirit, and anyone who has ever been in such experiences knows how these great doctrines of the faith are the things that sustain us, the doctrine of foreknowledge, the doctrine of predestination, the doctrine of divine calling. When you've been in the ultimate experiences of life, these are the doctrines that sustain you. To not preach them is to deprive the saints of the encouragement that they need in the deepest trials of life." He says, "These are the matchless mysteries of the grace of God, which are wines on the leaves well-refined." And then in a beautiful statement he says, "Suffering is the college of orthodoxy. Many a Jonah who now rejects to doctrines of the grace of God only needs to be put in the whale's belly, and he will cry out with the soundest free grace man. Salvation is of the Lord." What a beautiful thing that is. That's what brought Jonah to his great affirmation of faith, having the experience of the whale's belly. Salvation is of the Lord. Mr. Spurgeon also said that Jonah learned that line of good theology in a strange seminary, but it's one we have to learn.

Now, he said, as he finished these words, "I utter these things not in spirit of controversy, but the reverse, but unfortunately if you preach on the doctrine of election controversy is there." So speaking of controversy and the five points of Calvinism, we turn to the subject The Divine Purpose the Fountainhead of All Spiritual blessing.

Now, I want to make something very plain, because unfortunately all of the people who listen to the word of God are not well taught in the Bible. When we talk about the five points of Calvinism, we are talking about soteriological truth, salvation truth. Now, it is possible for a man to hold this doctrine and not necessarily hold to all that John Calvin taught and believed. For example I would stand there myself. I don't believe everything that Calvin wrote. He was a man and he made some mistakes, on the other hand, these are important teachings in the doctrine of salvation. Let me go through them.

Total depravity, which means that there is nothing in man that may please God. It means the will the mind the emotions have been touched by sin. Not that man is as bad as he can be, but that sin has touched all of his faculties. Unconditional election, that is that God has chosen the saints of God according to his good pleasure. Not according to their works, not according to faith that he foresees. They will exercise when they are born and live, but according to his good pleasure, according to his sovereign good pleasure. Definite atonement, particular redemption—Jesus Christ came in the will of God to die for the elected people of God. His death is sufficient for all to be preached to all, but the intent of his atoning work was to save the elect, definite atonement, particular redemption. Limited atonement is a popular term for it, but that's a false term because the Arminians limit the atonement just as well as the Calvinists. The Calvinists limit the intent or design or extent of the atonement. The Arminians limit the efficacy of the atonement, saying that the atonement is made for people who are not ultimately redeemed, or intended for people who are not ultimately redeemed. So they limit the efficacy of the atonement. Calvinists limit the design of the atonement. Both limit the atonement, so when we talk about limited atonement, naturally a Calvinists doesn't like to say he believes that unless the Arminian's willing to admit he does.

We limit it from the divine standpoint. He limits it from the human standpoint that is man's resistance for what God intended for him, and Calvinists like to say, "Shall we look at it from the divine standpoint, or from the human standpoint?" Irresistible grace, that is that for the saints there comes a time, when the Holy Spirit brings a man to trust in Jesus Christ. He makes unwilling hearts, for all are unwilling. He makes a hearts of the saints who are unwilling, willing. That is his work, and finally that those who have believed in Jesus Christ shall persevere in the faith.

Now, this morning I am not speaking about particular redemption, definite atonement, limited atonement. What I am speaking about is unconditional election, unconditional election. Election is according to God's good pleasure. That is our subject this morning, so if you go out and you feel, "Why he must have talked about limited atonement." No, I did not, but the principle is the same in all of these things. It's freedom of God to choose, whom he will. All right now, we understand each other, don't we? No, we don't. It's obvious we don't. From experience we don't, but Calvin said, "Go ahead anyway. Lewis, and preach it." So all right thank you, John, I appreciate the encouragement. I'll see you in heaven and thank you personally.

We turn now to "The Divine Purpose, the Fountainhead of All Spiritual Blessing," and we look first of all at the principle at the purpose of God in verse 28, and we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called, according to his purpose. One grand divine continuing providence encircles and supports the saints of God as they walk through the Valley of Sufferings.

Now, he says this is for those who love God, so he looks at the objects of this providence from the human standpoint. Our response is to believe and love God. In fact, Paul says, "If a man loved not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." All people who have responded to the gospel love God. Now of course their love may grow through the years. It does go through the years, but all believers love God. That's the human side of the matter. The nature of the purpose itself is all things work together for good.

Now, this is not fatalism as if there is a blind chance behind the things that happen to the believers. It's the plan of a loving Father, and that makes all the difference in the world, between the doctrine of fatalism and the doctrine that is taught in the word of God. The God of eternity is the God of every hour and minute, for a believer in Jesus Christ.

Now, we learn these things in experience. Jacob had to learn them. Joseph had to learn them. Joseph, you'll remember, was sold into captivity by his brothers after they weakened in their desire to kill him. He was sold into the hands often Midianities. Ultimately found his way into the hands of the Egyptians. And then you know the story we've just gone over recently how that finally the brethren of Joseph, who had put him in that pit are brought down to Egypt in the providence of God and Joseph, longing to unveil himself to them, finally does. He weeps out loud and falls upon their neck and tells them the story of his life from the divine standpoint. He says, "You sold me into Egypt, but God sent me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity on the earth, so now it was not you that sent me here but God." And so Joseph, knowing through experience that God works even in evil matters, recognized the sovereign hand of God in his life. "All things work together for good for Joseph." And not only for Joseph but for the brethren.

Now, finally Jacob dies, and the brethren are still afraid, lurking deep down within is a failure to completely trust Joseph, who has unveiled himself to them. And you know that at the end when Jacob died, they said, "Well, now that Jacob's gone, he'll surely punish us for what we have done." And Joseph comforted them, and said to them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God, but as for you, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day to save many people alive." So Joseph went down into Egypt, became the Prime Minister of Egypt, for the good of the brethren who put him in the pit. "All things do work together for good, for those that love God and for those who are the called according to his purpose." The God of eternity is the God of every hour of the believers.

Now, he also looks at these individuals from the divine standpoint. He says in that 28th verse, "Who are the called according to his, (that is God's) purpose." Well, that is nothing more than a more searching definition to use a phrase of one commentator. A more searching definition of what it means to love God. The man who loves God is the individual who has been brought to faith by God, and thus he is the person who has responded according to the purpose of God, purpose of God.

George Pentecost was a Bible teacher of a couple of generations ago, and Mr. Pentecost says in one of his books how he was visiting a lady who had been in deep trouble. She had had trouble with her husband. She had lost her husband. She had lost her children, and now a sorrow worse than death itself had happened to her, and he was trying to comfort her, but he was not having much luck. Now, that just slipped out didn't it? [Laughter] He was not having much response. [Laughter] So anyway she was engaged in working over a piece of tapestry for a pillow or a cushion or something like

that, but it was lying on her lap with the wrong side up, and so guided by the Holy Spirit he said, "Well, I must say," as the conversation he was not getting anywhere with here, he said, "I must say that's a very ugly and ill conceived design, if indeed it's not without design." And then with a slight note of resentment, that he had so rudely criticized her handwork, she said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "Well, I'm surprised that a sensible woman like you would spend your time working over such a senseless piece of work as that. I can see nothing but a lot of confused ends, and bits of wool. Apparently masked together without any order, and furthermore without any reference to color. There is no pattern or no design about it at all." And she said, "Why you're stupid. You are looking at the wrong side. Of course it looks ragged and confused on this side." And with that she turned it over and said, "Now, what do you think?"

He said, "Well, it's a beautiful pattern, I must admit, but I must also say to you that you are stupid because you've been looking at your life from the wrong side. You've been looking at it from the human standpoint. Not looking at it from the divine standpoint. God works all things together for good, to those that love him, to those who are the called according to his purpose. These things that have been happening to you are the confused bits and ends and pieces of your life looked at from the human standpoint, but when we get to heaven you'll look back and say, what a beautiful design, God wrought in my life."

I can image Jacob and Paul when they get together in heaven, they not only discuss the doctrines of the grace of God, but they also discuss the doctrine of patriarchic and apostolic stupidity. That also is a doctrine of the word of God. Jacob, you know when he lost Joseph, and then he lost Simeon, and the prime minister of Egypt said, "I want Benjamin." Benjamin the brother, the blood brother of Joseph, and the only other son of Rachel, his beloved that he had, he said, "All these things are against me." How stupid.

Well, listen. Everything was working wonderfully for Jacob. Joseph was not dead. He was the prime minister of Egypt. Simeon was not in prison, but he was detained by a brother's heart, who was bursting to express his love for him, and only because he wanted Benjamin, his blood brother, did he confine Simeon, and furthermore they were starving in the land, and he was the one who had charge over all of the granaries of the greatest kingdom upon the face of the earth at that time, when Jacob said, "All these things are against me." It was like the dawn just before the morning in the brightness of the sun, God's blessing was to be poured out upon him so that finally this same fellow who said, all these things are against me, says, "The God that fed me all the days of my life." And Apostle Paul, called to be the apostle of the Gentiles found himself, in prison. He could have argued similarly what's the point of this. I must be out of the will of God, but it was in the prison that he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, letters that have blessed the church of God down through the years. Later on his confinement, he wrote 2 Timothy. I can image when Paul and Jacob run across each other in the streets of heaven they say, "What stupid children we were." It's a magnificent text.

Now, why is it so great? Well, the next two verses, tell us why. Notice verse 29, "For (This gives the reason for this great purpose. It explains it and essentially he says, we were lovingly destined to eminence in the preeminence of Jesus Christ.) For whom he did foreknow." Oh, what a great amount of controversy that simple little statement has

caused. My friend, there are only three answers to the question, why did God elect anyone to salvation. Only three answers can be given.

Number one, he elected those who did good works. Well, now any Christian cries out immediately, "That's impossible because we do not please God by good works. We are not saved by good works. For by grace are ye saved through faith, that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast." That cannot be right. The Pelagians are wrong. The other possible answer is God elected those whom looking down through the years, he foresaw would believe. Out of their freewill, and he elected them. Of course there are so many things that one might say in opposition to this that one knows hardly where to begin. Do you mean that God gained knowledge by looking down thought the years, then evidentially there was a time when he didn't have all knowledge, and thus he's not an omniscient God after all, only know after he's learned a few more things?

Furthermore, if there is something in us that causes God to choose us, then there's something in us that pleases God, and if there is something that pleases God, his salvation is not totally of grace. The man who responds out of his free will has something that the man who does not respond does not have, and his salvation depends upon what Christ did, plus that something that caused him to respond out of his free will and belief. No, no such a doctrine is opposed to the principle of the grace of God. That's why the reformers were opposed to it. That's why Luther opposed it. That's why Calvin opposed it. Both sides of the reformation opposed the doctrine of election according to foreseen faith. That cannot be true.

Furthermore if that were true, just for the sake of argument, if it were true, that God looked down through the years and saw who would believe and choose them. The next question we should ask would be "Well, where did the faith come from?" And the Bible tells us faith is the gift of God, so we're back again to election according to the good pleasure of his will. It is as simple as that.

The only other possibility, the third is that God has chosen the elect of God according to his good pleasure. That is the ultimate ground of our election. His sovereign good, pleasure. That's what we mean when we say unconditional election, unconditional, not dependent upon works, not dependent upon works as manifested in foreseen faith, but in the sovereign good pleasure of God.

My dear elect friend, there wasn't one thing in you that God was so enamored with that he choose you for that. He chose you rather because of what he was going to make of you. And because he set his love upon you with all of your flaws, all of your sin, all of your total depravity, the Bible says election proceeds out of divine love. Who can explain love? Who can explain why some handsome fellow falls in love with a homely girl? Or who can understand why a beautiful woman falls in love with an ugly fellow? Or who can understand anybody's love? You cannot. It's sovereign. It cannot help it. It's sovereign. That's part of our life, but what does it mean Dr. Johnson? It says, whom he foreknew? Well, now I've included some material in the lesson, which I am not going to have time to over.

The Bible uses terms in accordance with its own meaning. To foreknow means to choose before hand or better, to fore-love. Let me give you an illustration. Amos says, with reference to Israel, God's speaking, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." Did God know all the nations on the earth? Why, of course. He has all

knowledge, but he said, "You only have I known." What did he mean? Only Israel as a nation had been chosen. To foreknow a person is to enter into intimate relationship with them, and choose them. Foreknowledge or knowledge is a Hebraic term, which has to do with intimacy. To know in the Old Testament is the word for sexual intercourse, the most intimate of relationships.

To foreknow is to enter into intimate relationship with an individual before the ages of time, and choose them. There are three great terms, foreknowledge, which means fore-love, predestination, which has to do with the goal of a person's election. We are destined to be like Christ, and then election, which has to do with selection. The difficulty with this doctrine would be greatly, immensely less if we wouldn't insist on dragging God down out of eternity, and making him just a man who thinks like men.

Listen, oh if I could just get people to study the Bible, if I could just get you in this audience to study the Bible. I know you are offended. You are saying, "I study the Bible." No. I am speaking of something else. Some of you know. Some of you study it more than I do. Some of you are very acute in your understanding of Scripture, but a lot of you think you are and you are not. I speak as unto wise men. Judge ye what I say.

Look at the text. It says, "Whom he foreknew." Not what. It doesn't say that he elected on the basis of what he saw. It says he foreknew people, foreknew whom, whom he foreknew. It's not what they would do for him. It's what he would do for them that Paul is talking about. If the Arminian is right, then we ought not to sing or say we love him because he first loved us, but he loves us because we first loved him. The apostles don't know the tune to the stanza. It's not taught in Scripture.

Furthermore the Arminians ought to preach man rather than God when they speak about election, for the ultimate choice is made by the individual, by their understanding of things, not by the Lord God, who only ratifies their choice, who looks down through the years, and says, "Ah, Samuel Lewis Johnson Jr. is going to believe. I will choose him, and he's learned something." Oh, no. No, no. Our sovereign God accomplishes his purposes.

Look again at the text. There are five great acts in this golden chain of salvation. Foreknow, predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Can there be any doubt about four of them that there are great divine acts? Predestination, called, justified, glorified. Can there be any doubt about that? Foreknowledge itself is the divine working, and the very fact that these acts are of divine activity confirm the fact that this too is divine activity.

Mr. Spurgeon said, "I am so glad he chose me before he saw me. If he'd waited until he saw me, he might not have wanted me." [Laughter] You know when we get to heaven there are going to be some of you in Believers Chapel that are going to get exempted from Theology 101. Did you know that? [Laughter] Theology 101 is the study of the doctrine of the grace of God in heaven, and a lot of my good friends, I know, because I was there, who don't yet understand the fullness of the grace of God. But when you get to heaven the angel will say, "Where did you go to church?" "Believers Chapel." "Exempt Theology 101. Go into Theology 102." [Laughter]

Now, of course I am just joking, but you know there are people who think, "Dr. Johnson, my goodness, you are teaching something that is strange. Why doesn't everybody else teach this? How can you stand alone?" Well, I fortunately, I don't stand alone. If I stood alone, I would worry. [Laughter] If I stood alone, I would say, "Wait a minute, I better see what the Holy Spirit has taught the Christian church." This is not

something taught by an individual or an isolated movement. Unconditional election is taught in some of the greatest of the Christian creeds. The Westminster Confession of Faith does not say anything more or anything less than what I am saying to you right now. The thirty-nine articles of the Anglican church does not say anything more or anything less than I am saying to you right now. The canons of the Synod of Dort do not say anything more or anything less than I am saying to you right now. The Belgic confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, these are standard confessional documents that the great mass of the orthodox have affirmed is their faith, and they have testified to it in blood. I am not alone. I am with the saints.

Furthermore, Augustine believed this. Luther believed it. Calvin believed it. Bucer believed it. Knox believed it. Beza believed it. John Owen and the Puritans. Modern theologians, Charles Hodge, William G. T. Shedd, Benjamin B. Warfield. Today, James Packer, John Gerstner, Roger Nicole, Harold O. J. Brown, many, many others, and among Bible teachers, Donald Grey Barnhouse, James Montgomery Boise, Dr. Barnhouse's successor in Philadelphia, D. James Kennedy, R. C. Sproul, Manford Gutzke, Joel Nederhood of the *Back to God Hour*, which many of you hear, John Stott, and Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Dr. Chafer said this. He wrote it down. "There is little field for controversy left as to the biblical character of Calvinism. It may be assumed that Bible expositors almost without exception are Calvinists."

Now, that's not a very good reading of the modern situation, but you can see where Dr. Chafer stands, and he's still standing there in heaven, so when a person believes these doctrines, he's not standing by himself. He's standing with the saints of God, and when a man stands up and says, "God looks down through the years and sees who will believe and elects them," he's departing from these great confessions of faith. He's departing from these theologians. He's departing from men who have proclaimed this truth, and when he gets to heaven he'll go into Theology 101.

Now, you can get to heaven by believing in Jesus Christ. You don't have to be clear on the doctrines of election in order to get to heaven, but you'll enjoy it a whole lot more. [Laughter] After all it's nice to be exempt from Theology 101, and to enjoy it down here. Well, he says, "Whom he foreknew he predestinated." That's the future goal. We are to be like Christ, but he's to be preeminent. We are to be confirmed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many of the brethren. Conform to Christ, not to the sublimist of the prophets, not to the mightiest of the apostles, not even to Paul, but to Jesus Christ.

What is more final than our conformity to Christ? Well, his supremacy, and isn't it striking that we are going to be there among many brethren of the Lord Jesus. In this chapter we are told that we are able to call God, Father, Abba Father. We call God Father, and we call Christ our brother, magnificent expressions of the working of God.

Now, the apostle, after speaking of the steps that have to do with the eternal purpose speaks of those steps that have to do with the temporal performance of it, in verse 30. There are five steps from eternity to eternity. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification.

Now, the last three, we can talk about them quickly because we've already emphasized them in other parts, called, effectual calling, everybody who has ever called, in Pauline teaching is effectually called. He has brought to faith, and placed in the body

of Christ. Justified, declared righteous. He now possesses that righteousness, which God's righteousness requires him to require, as William Cunningham put it, and finally he shall be glorified, but it is so certain in the apostle's mind that he puts it in the past tense. Glorified, isn't that magnificent. We are actually so certain to be like him, he can say, past tense.

Now, when I was going through theological seminary, Dr. Chafer liked to look at those verses, and say, "These verses teach eternal security." He said, "Notice the pronouns." "Whom he predestinated, them he called." He said, "How many are left out in the traversing from whom to them?" Well, of course the "them" refers to the "whom". "None." We said in our minds. Whom he called, them he justified. How many of the called are justified? All of course, and whom he justified them he glorified. Every person justified, is to be glorified. The Bible teaches the security of the person who is believed in Jesus Christ. He will persevere because of God's preservation through the experiences of life.

I love that story. I've mentioned it several times here, of the theological student who studying soteriology. And he had been studying the doctrine of the *ordo salutis*, and his professor has said, there are seven steps and he had expounded them. Foreknowledge, predestination, election, calling, justification, sanctification, glorification. So when the exam was set, he began to study his notes. He came to the *ordo salutis*, and he said, there are seven things. I've got to memorize these seven things, and so he memorized the seven things, he thought. He said, "I believe the professor is liable to ask that question." So he got in the class. He looked, and there it was. "What's the *ordo salutis*? Set forth the steps and briefly explain them." He started out foreknowledge, election, predestination, calling, justification and glory. He expounded them, but he counted up only six. He said he knew there was seven. Couldn't think of that sixth one to save his life. Finally, a minute before the bell, he became frantic and when the bell rang, he had the seven down there. He knew it was there, and so he just put down "more glory." [Laughter] Well, it was right, more glory, but unfortunately, when he looked at it, he did like most professors. He said, "Ha, ha, ha, what an answer. X." [Laughter]

Yes, it is more glory, but it's so certain that he can put it in the past tense. Well, I think I know now why Paul spoke of the glory as he did. The suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, so in the midst of sufferings, to what do we turn? To the superficial pap that you find in most Christian books today. No, you will be forced to turn to these great five facts that make up the golden chain of salvation. That these experiences of life are part of God's disciplining of me for eternity. And he will sustain you in the midst of them, and hold you up, and give you the assurance of his presence as you lean upon these great truths.

Samuel Rutherford the old Scottish Presbyterian, who had such a large part in the writing of the Westminster confession of faith, used to say, "Whenever I find myself in the cellar of affliction, I always look about for the wine." Well this is the wine of the Christian faith, these great things that make up the golden chain of salvation. How I wish you had a share in it. How I wish all of you Arminians in the audience, and all of you who are listening to me, in this message, how I wish you could understand the sovereign grace of God. It would be such a comfort to you. It would make so much of the word of God plain to you. It would enable you to appreciate more and more what Jesus Christ has

done for you. The apostle begins, "Now, we know." Do we know? Are these things really our possession? Do we realize that Jesus Christ is offered the all-atoning sacrifice, and it's available for sinners who know they are sinners, and they can in their hearts say, "O God, yes I am a sinner. I see that my thoughts are not Thy thoughts. My ways are not Thy ways. My life is not in accordance with Thy will. I have offended a Holy God. I am on the way to destruction everlasting. I flee to Christ. I take as a free gift, the salvation that he offers.

You know when a person comes to that, he passes from death into life and from darkness his marvelous light, and he begins the path that will lead through the valley of suffering, but ultimately on to Mt. Glory. May God help you to come. Come to Christ. Don't leave this auditorium without making that decision. As an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, I say to you, be reconciled to God. Come to Christ. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths, which are so meaningful and significant to us. Thou hast wonderfully blessed us in grace, unconditionally, according to Thy good pleasure. We bow before Thee the sovereign God, and adore Thy name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.