**God’s Actions in Our Salvation**

**Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)**

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Today we’re going to be looking at Romans 8:29-30. I have to caution you. We are entering into Theology Zone here this morning as we look at Romans 8:29-30. So let’s prepare our hearts. This is not sort of a fluffy devotional, but we’re going to enter into some of the deeper waters that God has provided for us about Himself and about His plan, today. And I know for certain that not every one of you will leave here saying, “I agree with Pastor Ritch.” I know that, and I love you! I really do. It is not my intention to belittle you or your thoughts about this area. It is my intention to exalt God and His great gospel this morning. And I trust that we’re going to do that together.

Romans chapter 8. I’m going to pick up with verse 28 because what follows, really, in verses 29-30 is an explanation of why the promise of verse 28, which is so precious to Christians throughout the ages, why that promise is true. And it’s not because of anything you and I do. It has solely to do with what God does for us on our behalf.

***28*** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* ***29*** *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.* ***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

May God encourage us through His Word today. What a great, great text!

The former pastor of Moody Church, Harry Ironside, told a story of a Christian who publicly shared his testimony. This man told how God had sought him and found him, how God had loved him, called him, saved him, delivered him, cleansed him, and revealed Him. This man rejoiced throughout his testimony in God’s grace, in God’s power, and in God’s glory in saving him from a joyless life, alienated from God, into a life filled with happiness in God and reconciliation to God. After the meeting, a rather concerned brother took him aside and began to criticize his testimony. He said, “I appreciated all you said about what God did for you. But you didn’t mention anything about your part in it. Salvation is really part us and part God. You should have mentioned something about your part.” The older Christian smiled and said, “Oh, yes. I apologize for that. I’m sorry. I really should have said something about my part. My part was running away, and God’s part was running after me until he caught me. I should have mentioned that.”

You see, our salvation is entirely God’s doing. Our only part in our salvation is the sinning; His is the forgiving. Our only part in our salvation is the rebelling; His is the reconciling. We made a mess of our lives and thus we needed God’s deliverance. And praise God that’s exactly what He did! You see, if any part of our salvation rested upon our acting, not one of us here in this Sanctuary and not one of us all throughout the world, throughout time, would be saved. Salvation is of the Lord and from the Lord.

Romans 8 is given to God’s children so that we would have confidence in the salvation that God has secured for us. This chapter begins with that bold statement: “There is therefore now no condemnation…” None! Not now, not forever! “No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (verse 1) Here in Romans 8:29-30 we are given two precious verses that prove to every child of God that our salvation does not depend upon our acting in love toward God, but on God’s acting in love toward us. And that’s why we’re so secure. Because if our salvation rests in any part upon our acting in love toward God, we would falter. We would fail. But it doesn’t. It rests completely on God’s acting in love toward us. And in that we can say we have certainty.

The main idea behind these verses is that God’s children are all safe because God sovereignly acts in love in eternity past, and in the present, and in eternity future to make us safe in Christ Jesus. So, He’s ever acting in eternity past, in the present, and in eternity future. He’s acting sovereignly in love to make us safe. These verses, I believe, will first humble us and then will strengthen us.

What a comfort to know that our salvation is not left to our own efforts or to our own keeping. He who is omnipotent and sovereign does this sure work from the beginning all the way to the end. He has taken the whole of it in His hands.Not a part of our salvation is left to chance or to change or to loss. Such a doctrine of God’s sovereign grace causes us to rest securely in Him without fear of condemnation. How exactly does God secure us to Himself? God now describes five loving actions that He takesin the lives of each one of His children. If you are a child of God through faith in Jesus, God has acted in these five ways towards you.You may not even know it, but He has acted in these five ways towards you.

These five actions have been rightly described as a “chain of five golden links.” It’s a chain, a salvation chain, a chain of five golden links. God forges each link together from His throne in heaven in such a way so that they are unbreakable. These great actions of God link God’s children to eternity past and eternity future. Again, I caution you as we enter God’s Word this morning. You will need to love God with your mind this morning if you would receive grace and truth from Him. Hopefully, that’s true of every Sunday, but today it’s particularly true.

One more caveat I would make. I know again, that some of you will not believe what I have to teach you this morning. Some of you will even be deeply troubled by it. It’s not my goal to disrupt your peace or even to debate with you. For those who deny what I share this morning, I hope that the exposition of this text will at least bring you to the point where you see the loveliness of these doctrines and will wish them to be true. That’s what I hope to do this morning.

There are five saving actions of God in eternity past. That first action is presented for us in verse 29 and repeated in verse 30. Let’s look at this together.

***29*** *For those whom he foreknew…*

**1. God foreknew us.**

***29*** *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.*

God here is explaining what He means by the promise in verse 28.

***28*** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good…*

What is that good toward which God is working all things? What is that end? What is that goal? Well, verse 29 communicates that God’s good end is that we would be conformed into the image of His Son. In being conformed to the image of His Son, we would enjoy His glory now, and we would enjoy His glory completely and fully forever. So God’s sweet promise is that He’s taking every event, all things that take place in this life for His children, and He’s using them in His infinite wisdom and knowledge, fashioning them to conform us to this happy state. This is God’s sweet promise to us who experience the suffering and brokenness of this present world. Suffering and brokenness don’t ever leave us in suffering and brokenness. But God uses them to bring us to this infinitely happy state of sharing in the glory of God as we are conformed into the likeness of Jesus.

So then the question is, how do we *know* that God works all things together for this ultimate good, this eternal good, this eternal happiness of those who love Him? Again, the answer is explained in verses 29 and 30. We know the promise of Romans 8:28 is true because God began working in us before we were born to move us as His children to this good goal. So, if God began this work to bring us to this goal of happiness in Him through conforming to Jesus before we were born, before this world was even created, is it possible that anything that takes place in this broken world would hinder God from fulfilling His purpose and His plan? The answer is, No! Instead, everything that does happen happens in such a way that God is fashioning even the sins of sinful men, even the brokenness of this world, to bring us to this ultimate state of happiness in Christ. God gives us verses 29 and 30 so that we would be more confident in the promise of verse 28. If we understand verses 29-30, we’re going to be able to claim more strongly, more forcefully, when our world gets broken and we begin to suffer, this great promise. In these verses, God gives us a picture of His invisible working in heaven. We’ll never see this, at least in this life. We’ll never see these actions taking place, but this is what God says He is doing from heaven. And God calls us to rest upon His work so that we would find our joy complete in Him. So, God’s first act in moving us toward His glory and toward our joy in relationship with Himself is this act of foreknowing us.

That word “foreknow” simply means “to know beforehand.” To be sure, debate abounds among some godly Christians regarding what God’s foreknowledge means. Some say that God foreknew us in the sense that He peered into the future and He saw who was going to choose to believe in Him and that He foreknows that person in the sense that He sees their faith. And thus, He foreknows that they’re going to believe before they are even born. Now many godly Christians explain God’s foreknowledge in this way. But I believe this view to be wrong. Surely, God *does* see everything that takes place in the future. So, it’s not wrong in that sense. But it’s wrong in the sense that that’s not the meaning of this word. Nowhere in the Bible do we find the description of God’s foreknowledge as God seeing into the future the decisions man would make and then acting on the basis of man’s decisions. We don’t find that ever described.

By way of definition, I believe that God’s foreknowledge simply means that God set His personal, infinite love upon His children before they were born. Wouldn’t you wish that to be true at least, even if you didn’t believe it? That before we were born, when we were dead in our sins, when we were lost, when we had no desire for God and weren’t seeking after Him, that God set His love upon us? This is His personal, infinite love upon us, so that we would know Him and enjoy Him. Our salvation did not originate in our own thoughts about God or our own need for God. Before we drew our first breath, God foreknew us unto salvation. He determined to establish a relationship of love with us. In short, a person’s salvation began in the mind of God in eternity past.

Now you ask, why do I believe that God’s “foreknowledge” is God’s setting His love upon His redeemed before they were born? Let me offer you these five reasons to believe that God’s foreknowledge is just this. It is His setting of His love upon His own children in eternity past. Foreknowledge is not His knowing what we are going to do in reference to Him, and then saving us on the basis of our choice of Him. But His foreknowledge is His setting of His love, His infinite, personal love, upon us so that we would enjoy Him.

Reason #1: Romans 8 is written specially about and for those who are in Christ Jesus.

This chapter emphasizes God’s guarantee to secure His own children unto eternal happiness. Now God “foreknows” everyone in the sense that He looks into the future and sees what everyone is going to do. But here, whatever God means when He speaks of foreknowledge is not applicable to those outside of Christ. He is speaking of a kind of foreknowledge, knowledge beforehand, that is applicable *only* to those who are in Christ Jesus. This foreknowledge of God is a blessing *only* for those who experience Christ. No person who remains outside of Christ, outside of God’s justifying work, outside of entering into the glory, can say that they are foreknown by God. And we can say that on the basis of verse 30. Catch this! We’ll make this observation often.

***29*** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined…****30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

In other words, everyone who is foreknown is also predestined. Everyone who is predestined is also called. Everyone who is called is also justified. Everyone who is justified is also glorified. So who is it that is foreknown? It is only those who are ultimately going to be justified and ultimately glorified.

Reason #2: The Hebrew word that is translated “to know” expresses a personal relationship of love and affection.

The word “foreknowledge” doesn’t appear in the Old Testament, but when the word, "know" is used in connection with God, it means to "choose" or "set His love upon." So for instance, God says to Jeremiah,

**Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

Did you catch that? That’s an explanation of His foreknowledge. “Jeremiah, before you chose Me, while you were in the womb, I knew you personally. I knew you!”

And then of Israel God says:

**Deuteronomy 9:24** You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day I knew you.

So again, it’s the knowledge of relationship. When God “knows” people, He cares for them. He enters into covenant relationship with them. He loves them.

Of Israel again,

**Amos 3:2** You only have I known of all the families of the earth;

Again, it’s unique to those whom God sets His love upon. “You only of all the nations of the earth. I’ve not known any of the nations of the earth except for you.” And again, that word is a kind of knowledge that is personal, related to His love. If you skip forward to Romans chapter 11, just look over one page. This is in reference to Israel. And I think he’s thinking of Amos 3 as he writes this.

**Romans 11:2** God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

He uses the word “foreknew” of the people of Israel in the same manner Amos does in chapter 3 verse 2, of a special kind of love for them, a covenantal love. Being foreknown simply means that God’s children are loved in advance of their being created.

Reason #3: God has already said that not one of us seek Him. So no one would believe without God setting His love upon us.

We read that in Romans 3.

**Romans 3:10-12** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;no one understands; no one seeks for God.All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

If no one seeks after God, how does anyone believe upon Him apart from seeking after Him? God says that doesn’t happen. No one seeks after God. Everyone looks at idols and they say, “I think happiness and joy are found in these gods.” No one looks at the true and living God and says, “that’s where life is found.” No one does. We together become worthless. Our understanding has become darkened. What is the source of our faith in Jesus if our hearts are so naturally averse to God and apathetic to His glory? In other words, we could care less about what God is doing and who God is. What would motivate anyone to believe in God whom they refuse to seek after, were it not for God setting His love upon us?

Reason #4: God teaches us that our faith and repentance come from Him and not from within our own hearts.

Faith actually is the product of God setting His love upon us. It is not the cause of Him setting His love upon us. Now, this is an important principle, so I’m going to share with you a number of Scriptures. This isn’t all of them, but it’s just a number so that you’d think through “where does faith come from? Is it from somewhere inside of me and my will or is it from God as a result of His setting His love upon us?”

**Hebrews 12:2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

Where does our faith come from? Well, Jesus is the author of it.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

What is “this” and what is “it”? I think it’s the whole of salvation, he’s talking about there. Everything related to salvation is a gift of God. Everything related to salvation is not of our own doing. It’s the grace of God’s provision in Christ, but it is also our faith. No one of us would seek after God. No one of us would desire Him. No one of us would want Him. We’d all be blind and darkened in our understanding, thinking that God has nothing to offer us, were it not for God’s grace and gift.

**1 Timothy 1:13-14** though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Paul writes his own testimony. So where does Paul say this faith for the Lord Jesus comes from? It’s from the grace of God overflowing to him. That’s how he has faith, he says. That’s how this insolent opponent became a friend of God.

**Philippians 1:29** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

It’s been granted that we should suffer, but it’s also been granted that we should believe in Him. It’s a gift.

**John 6:65** And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

“It” has been granted to him, the desire to come. The faith to come has been granted to him as a gift by the Father.

**Acts 11:18** When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin. Where does repentance come from? God granted it.

**2 Timothy 2:25** correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,

God does not love us because He saw that we would choose to love Him. We love Him because in mercy and grace, He chose to love us.

Reason #5: God foreknows people.

Anytime this word is used, the emphasis is on people. It’s not on people’s actions or behaviors or decisions. It’s always upon the people. So He doesn’t use this word to describe His prior knowledge of man’s decisions or future actions. Now, He has such knowledge. Don’t get me wrong. I don’t deny that He doesn’t have such knowledge. He does. But the term “foreknowledge” has to do again, with His personal relationship with people, with His children, and specifically before they came to know Him.

One more little piece of evidence just to speak of how this word is used in reference to Jesus. The Father in speaking of His personal love for His eternal Son, Jesus, says,

**1 Peter 1:20-21** He [Jesus] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

God foreknew His Son before the foundation of the world. He set His love upon His Son. They’re co-eternal. So it’s different from His foreknowledge of us who aren’t eternal. We had a beginning. But from eternity past, God foreknew His Son and particularly that His Son would take on human flesh and He would love His Son in the midst of that work and accomplish that work through Him. So once again, the term “foreknowledge” always has to do with people and not with decisions or behaviors of people.

Now the second action of God. He foreknew us, but He also predestined us.

**2. He predestined us.**

***29*** *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son…*

These two actions of God are related, but they’re not the same. Being foreknown means that God rejoiced over His own children in eternity past. He rejoiced in love over us, His children. But there is even more to God’s sovereign love than that He set His love upon us. With this word and work “predestined,”God tells us that He has designed for us to enter in to the happy state of knowing Him and experiencing Him as the great and good God He is. No happier state could ever be experienced than to share in God’s glory, to be conformed to the image of Jesus, being freed from all sin and being shaped into the likeness of Jesus in His righteousness, in His goodness, in His mercy, in His wisdom, in His wholeness, in every way, conformed into the likeness of Jesus, and this conforming to Jesus is our future destination. It’s our future end. And it is our future end for one reason. God acts upon us to make it so. That’s the reason why. You see how secure we are? Before we messed up, God set His love upon us even though He knew everything that we were going to do to mess up. And before we messed up, God said, “Here’s the end to which I am bringing this person. I’m bringing this person into the conformity of my Son, into that joy, and that is My sovereign design for this, My child.” This is where all of those who are in Christ will arrive one day. It is an end of eternal happiness, and it has been secured for us beforehand. *Pre*-destined.

Let me give you a definition. “Predestination” simply means that in eternity past, God secured for us the experience of being happy in God’s love forever. And again, I know that some don’t like the idea of predestination. I know they don’t like this term. But wouldn’t you want to like that? Don’t you see the loveliness of that? That’s all I’m arguing at this point. Can’t you see the loveliness of that, that God secured for us before we even entered this world, the experience of being happy in His love forever? And it is secure absolutely by God in His lovingkindness and grace. Do you see why so many believers glory in this truth?

If you are a child of God, I want you to think of that. God rejoiced over you before you were born. He rejoiced over you in love. And then in rejoicing over you (that’s what it means to be foreknown) He set His sovereign intention to see that you would move from unhappy sin to unending joy in Him. That’s what it means to be predestined. Many believers chafe when they hear the word “predestined.” But friend, please know that God loves this word! That’s unarguable, is it not? Whatever might be said of the word, “predestination,” please note that it is written boldly and happily by God with permanent ink in the pages of His eternal Word.

**Ephesians 1:4-6** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

I love that because it tells us something even more than Romans 8. Romans 8 says that He predestined us to be conformed to the image of Jesus. But here, our predestination even goes to our position, not just our ultimate condition, but our position. He predestined us for adoption. He says, “It is My determination to destine this one to be in My family before the world began. That is My work.”

**Ephesians 1:11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Again, to be predestined simply means that God in love secured our happy inheritance in Him before we were born.Our own efforts and goodness are wholly excluded from this gracious work of God to bless those whom He determines to love. God did not predestine us because of anything in ourselves, for we were nothing when God set His love upon us and determined that this would be our end.

**3. God called us.**

***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called…*

Here, God is not referencing the call that is general to all mankind. God does indeed make a general call for everyone to come to Him and receive mercy and grace through Jesus. That call is an invitation that is open to all. Every time we share the Gospel, we are right to make this general call known to every person we meet. I would urge you to do just that. The Gospel is God’s power to bring salvation. Make the call! Send it broad and wide! God invites all to come and receive eternal life. So for instance, Jesus says:

**Matthew 11:28-29** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**John 7:37-38** …Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

This call is universal. It is given to everyone. It’s given broadly, throughout God’s creation. “If anyone thirsts…”

**Acts 17:30** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

The invitation is also a command. Christian, when was the last time you shared God’s call with a friend or relative? I would urge you that God uses such feeble efforts. I know we’re not fully equipped. I know we feel inadequate to that cause. But when we invite others to believe in Jesus for eternal life, God is glorified. Now, some will come and believe in Jesus and many others will not. The response will be mixed to this general call of God upon the lives of others. Who responds positively to this general call of God to come and believe in Jesus? Well, the Bible tells us.

**John 6:35-37** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst…All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

Who comes? Did you catch that? Everyone whom the Father gives to the Son. Those are the ones who come. Are there any persons whom the Father gives the Son who does not come? The answer is, No! Jesus is very clear. “All that the Father gives to me will come.” Are there some who come that aren’t given by the Father? Well, He answers that later in a few verses.

**John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

This is the security. God never casts out those who come to Him, and God will raise up everyone whom the Father draws.

God’s call in verse 30 is different from His general call upon all people. The call in verse 30 is always effective, where the general call is only sometimes responded to by people. Every person who is called in the sense that God is meaning here in verse 30, comes to faith in Jesus. He’s 100% effective in bringing people to faith. No one who is called in this manner in verse 30, ever says, “Thank you, but no thank you, God.” No one ever does that. How do we know that that’s true? Look again at the text. The text helps us. God’s Word is so beautiful!

***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified…*

So everyone who is called in whatever meaning this is. I suggest it’s the meaning of God effectively calling, drawing people to Himself. But everyone whom the Father calls is justified. That’s what the passage clearly says. Does God justify every person? The answer is, No. We’ve already discussed that all through Romans. God doesn’t justify every person. It’s not the gospel of universalism where everybody is saved in the end. But everyone who is called is justified. Not one person who is called doesn’t end up justified.

This call is like the call Jesus made to Lazarus when He raised him from the dead. Do you remember what Jesus said? Lazarus is dead. He’s been in the tomb for over three days, and Jesus called. He said, “Lazarus, come out!” Let me ask you: was it possible for Lazarus not to respond to Jesus’ call? “No, I think I’ll stay dead in the tomb.” No! This was a call that was a miraculous effectual call upon Lazarus. Some commentators tell us I think humorously, that if Jesus had just said, “Come out!” the whole graveyard would have come forward. “Lazarus, come out!” Was it possible for Lazarus to remain dead in the grave? The answer is, No! Was it possible even for Lazarus to resuscitate and then not come out? And the answer is, why would you do that? If you were in a stinking tomb in darkness, covered in death, and God gave you the vigor and life of youth, and He said, “Come out!” would you not respond? And the answer is, Yes! Of course you’re going to respond. Of course you’re going to get out of that graveyard. And when God calls, of course we still have a response to make. Lazarus still had to get up. But of course we’re going to do it when we’re given life by God. That’s the point!

God’s calling means that God opens the eyes and hearts of sinners in such a way that they see His goodness and rejoice to come to Him in faith. The doctrine of God’s effectual working in our souls for salvation does not suggest that God makes us believe against our will. Please understand that’s not what this doctrine is teaching. God does not make us believe against our will. The doctrine of God’s effectual working and calling in our souls teaches us that God’s call makes blind eyes to see so that when we see the loveliness of God, we respond to cling to Him, to run to Him. Lazarus was happy to come out of the tomb because he was given life. All those who are effectually called by God are happy to believe in Jesus because they now see Him as the source of all happiness and all life. God uses His general call as the means to make His effectual call to His beloved people. So it’s vital that we labor to proclaim God’s Gospel and His general call to all people.

**4. God justified us.**

***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified…*

Before God justifies a person through faith in Jesus, God has already accomplished three great actions. Keep those in mind. He foreknew us, He predestined us and He called us. And then God justified us. Justified simply means that God legally declared us righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ Jesus imputed to our account. That’s what justification means. We’ve been studying that all through this letter. When we believe in Jesus, all of our sins are placed upon Jesus. He bears the punishment that our sins deserve and all of His righteousness then is placed upon us. This is the joy of justification.

Who is it that justifies? God is the One here who is the actor. He’s the One who does the work. We don’t justify ourselves. We can’t declare ourselves righteous and we can’t labor to make ourselves righteous. Our sin is too deep, too devastating, too dreadful for us to ever declare to God and others that we’re not guilty of grave defiance against the Lord.

Someone protests: If we are predestined and effectually called, do we really have to believe in Jesus? And the answer is, Yes! The argument is not that we don’t have to believe in order to be saved. Yes, we must believe in Jesus in order to be justified. That much is sure. But the question is: How is it that we who are blind, we who are dead in our trespasses and sins could possibly believe when we were very content remaining in our sins? When we weren’t seeking God at all? And the answer of course is in God’s sovereign work. While the source of our justification is God alone, the means of our justification is our faith. Faith is essential for us to be justified. Our faith is the instrument that God uses to connect us to the blessings of life that His Son has procured for us through His death, burial and resurrection. Now here’s the question. Where does that faith come from? There are only two sources. That faith comes somewhere from inside of us, or it comes from God. Where does that faith come from?

I’ll give a little bit of my testimony. This question regarding where faith comes from became my undoing as a senior in high school. I began asking the question, “Why do I believe in Jesus when most of my friends do not?” And I couldn’t discover the answer inside myself. I knew that the sins my friends were dealing with were the same sins of my own soul. I knew that I had no more natural love for God than my friends had. I knew I had no natural sensitivity to the Lord or to the gospel. I had no natural leaning toward the Lord that my friends did not. So why did I believe and receive the gift of eternal life and know God and find joy in Him, when my friends did not? I tell you it was nothing inside of me. What I learned as I studied the Scriptures on these very passages is that it is all of God. And it caused me to just fall upon my face and say, “God, I am undone by your gospel. I am completely undone by it. I have no merit, not even to say that something somewhere inside of myself was this little spark of faith. What you have given me, you have given me wholly. And it is mine simply to praise you for your infinite grace.”

**5. God glorified us.**

***30*** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

What it means to be glorified is that we share and rejoice and participate in God’s glory. God has already made clear that all of us have sinned. We’ve fallen short of God’s glory. And yet through Christ, God has said in Romans 5 that we share in this hope of glory. That is, that we share the hope that we’re going to be transformed. We’re not always going to be the way we are, but we’re going to be transformed into the image of Jesus. And one day, when that work is complete in us, we will no longer sin. We will no longer be tempted by sin. We will no longer have affections for other gods or beliefs that these other gods will bring us happiness. We will find our happiness complete in the One true God. We will no longer experience the ravages of sin upon our bodies or upon our souls. So we won’t get sick or weak. We will never grow tired or faint. We won’t get discouraged or despairing. We will never be lonely, never fearful, never anxious, never frustrated, never resentful, never hurt ever, ever again. To be glorified means that we will constantly enjoy all that God is, with all that we are. Isn’t that a great thing to look forward to?

I want you to make just one observation about this action before we look at applications. Do you notice that it’s spoken of as in the past tense? Let me ask you, you don’t have to raise your hand. Just think about this question inside your heart. How many of you have already been glorified? And we all have to say by our experience, none of us. And yet here, it is spoken of as in the past tense. It’s not that we *will* be glorified. Elsewhere, God speaks of us as someday being glorified. But here it speaks of past tense, as though it’s already happened. How could God speak of something as past tense when it is not yet? And here’s the answer. It is because He is describing His actions, not our experience. He says, “I have already accomplished this for all my children.” That is why!

If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ and you are united to Him through faith and you wonder “Have I sinned past my salvation?” the answer is, No. “There is therefore no condemnation.” Why is that? Because God has already acted upon your soul. He has glorified you already. That’s the truth of the amazing gospel.

Now what are some applications? It would be wrong for me to give all this great theology without any practical applications. And the practical applications are many.

1. Let us bow down in praise and adoration before Him who has acted in such love toward us!

To Him be glory now and forever! Only God’s grace can account for my faith, my forgiveness, my hope of heaven, my adoption into His family. He deserves the praise. So let’s give Him praise every day of the week. And let’s give Him praise for sure as we are together to rejoice in Him.

2. Let us walk humbly with God.

Friends, this must not make us arrogant souls. If it does, something is horribly wrong because what this doctrine teaches us is that we as God’s children have nothing to boast about regarding ourselves. We’re totally undone by this truth of the Gospel. The sovereign working of God in our salvation humiliates our pride. It doesn’t promote pride. Let’s walk humbly with Him and before others.

3. Let us place God at the center of all our loves, all our affections, all our desires.

This is where He belongs. He is the great actor who has acted in such a sovereign way. It is in Him we will find joy and happiness. So let’s place God at the center of all of our life.

4. Let us proclaim Jesus and the Good News boldly! God can transform any heart!

I wish I had more time to talk about this. But the truth of God’s sovereignty emboldens our witness. It doesn’t diminish it.

5. Let us dwell securely.

We never need fear God losing His grip on us. He is active in eternity past and in time. He has acted already in such a way as to secure our eternal future. We can be confident. We can dwell in peace when we are in Christ.

6. Let us look to Jesus only to find life in God.

Again, some hear a message like this and say, “Well, I don’t know whether I’m foreknown or predestined or called by God, or not. Maybe I am not one upon whom God has set His love!” Friend, I want to urge you. That concern is a terrible lie. If you are concerned about your eternal salvation, God says look to Jesus in faith. He has promised to rescue everyone who looks up to Him and believes in Him. You are no exception to that promise. He is absolutely faithful to give eternal life to everyone who would believe. Your salvation does not rest in your own hands, but in His. And that is why we must not harden our hearts when His Spirit begins to prompt us to believe. We’re not in control of our own will or of our own decisions to come to Jesus Christ as Savior. So if today you hear Him call you and command you to repent and believe, if you hear Him say, “Come to me all who are thirsty and I’ll give you the water of life,” I urge you this morning, do not delay! Come! Come this morning!