

Sermon Series Two: Awesome Children of an Awesome God
Glory Guaranteed (Part 2)
The Five Links in the Golden Chain
Romans 8:29-30

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.

You can know with absolute certainty that you are a child of God. You can know that every person who is genuinely saved is eternally saved. You will never be in danger of losing the spiritual life given to you by God through Jesus Christ. This morning we are going to jump into the deep end of the pool. No shallow water today! We are going to swim and we are going to swim with blessing. The deeper you go in your understanding of this passage the deeper will be your joy! This text introduces us to five great doctrines that have been rightly called **“a golden chain of five links forged in heaven”** or **“five undeniable affirmations.”** We discover the golden links in the golden chain of salvation. Those whom God starts out with are those whom he ends with. There is no slippage or separation inbetween. The text begins in eternity past and it ends in eternity future. **Notice that God is the subject of these five verbs.** It is God who foreknows; it is God who predestines; it is God who calls; it is God who justifies; and it is God who glorifies. God is the one who is acting and we are the ones who God is acting upon. Notice that all the verbs are in the past tense. It’s a done deal. It’s a finished process. This passage has raised a lot of questions and a lot of controversy. So now all of you motorboats (but, but, but, but,) please shut off your engines and listen carefully as we explain each of the five links in the Golden chain:

I. Foreknew

“For those whom he foreknew”

We must remember that this passage is not about what we do but entirely about what God does. This term does not mean “to know ahead of time” in the way we would normally understand it. It is not about God’s all-knowing foresight but about his fore-loving. God knows all things at all times exhaustively. He never adds to his knowledge in the way we do. Has it ever dawned on you that nothing ever dawns on God. God never looks down through history in order to see what will happen. He already knows exhaustively what will happen. Indeed, God fore-knows what will be by determining what will be. The faith that God sees in someone is the faith that he will create. **Do you realize that you have existed as one God has**

chosen to love - for as long as God has existed! God did not determine his choice of you on the basis of your actions or he would never have chosen you. God's choice of Jacob over Esau was not based on anything they had done - good or bad (Romans 9:10-13). **God determined before the world began that he would love you and he chose you to be a child of God. You became the object of his attention and his extravagant love.**

II. Predestined

“He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

This term in the original language was a term used by surveyors and it meant to mark out beforehand. It means to predetermine. That is, God mapped out ahead of time, God marked out a particular destination for you. God decided what he wanted you to be and that is to be like Christ. Thankfully, God did not mete out evenhanded justice or every person who has ever lived would have perished. God's justice could only condemn us. We needed mercy not justice! And so **God predetermined your destiny and what a destiny!** Part of that destiny is that we have become members of God's family and brothers and sisters in that family. We have been brought into a very special relationship with our “elder brother” Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is referred to here as the “firstborn.” Paul is not using this term in the sense of first generated (birthed), but of the preeminence, privilege, and authority that was given to a “firstborn” son in the family. He also uses the term firstborn to signify that there would be a long line of sisters and brothers who would join the firstborn of all creation, Jesus Christ, as part of the body of Christ or his family. It was always God's plan that he would bring many sons and daughters to glory! We are co-inheritors with Christ! We are truly awesome children of an awesome God!

III. Called

“And those whom he predestined he also called”

In the Bible, God calls in two different ways. There is the **external call** (common or universal) and the **internal call** (specific or effectual). The *external call* is the preaching of the gospel by evangelists such as Billy Graham that has gone out to the entire world. Multiplied millions have received this external call. But the knee-jerk reaction of most people is to reject the good news of salvation as outdated, irrational or unintelligent. Sadly, the majority of people who hear this call reject the call.

But for the chosen, God provides the willingness to respond positively. Notice that this cannot possibly be the same thing as the general call that goes out to the whole world. Why? Because everyone who receives this call is justified

without exception! We hear the *internal call* of the Holy Spirit to come to Jesus. we respond by recognizing that we are a sinner and by beginning to see that we have a beautiful Savior who longs to be our new Lord and master and to free us from our sin. What's so amazing about this grace is that if we were left to ourselves alone, we would never respond positively (John 6:44 "no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him;" Romans 3:11 "no one understands, no one seeks for God"). We come to the Father because we have been lovingly dragged to the Father. His overwhelming compelling love, his irresistible grace brought us to Christ. God regenerates or imparts life. And faith becomes the first true evidence of that life. And so if you are here this morning and have said yes to God's call, you have responded to the divine summons from the King of the universe and you have been drawn out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Now it is important that we not give the impression that people will be saved by the power of this call apart from their own willing response to the gospel. Though it is true that effective calling awakens and brings forth a response from us, we must always insist that this response still has to be voluntary, a willing response in which the individual person puts his or her trust in Christ. God does not compel us to go against our will; he just makes us willing to go! (hornet analogy; tornado analogy)

IV Justified

"And those whom he called he also justified"

Justification is an instantaneous legal act of God in which he thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us and declares us to be righteous in his sight and fit for heaven. Notice that it is not just forgiveness. It is much more. It is God declaring you to be as righteous as Christ. God is telling you that he is counting you as being as perfect as Jesus.

V. Glorified

"And those whom he justified he also glorified"

Glorification is the final step, the last golden link in the chain of salvation. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, and reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive, thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like Christ's own. Notice again that this is written in the past tense. If God accomplishes it, you cannot unaccomplish it! As Harry Ironside used to say, "Your part was running away and God's part was pursuing you till he caught you." And once he catches you he will never let you go! Your salvation is a completed deal. When we feel the devil is making one touchdown after another,

God whispers in our ear that he has already recorded the score and the score is 100 for God and zero for the devil.

Conclusion

Because God works all things together for good for all believers, God ends with the same number he begins with. Nobody falls through the cracks. God gets the purpose he longs for. That is to bring many sons and daughters to glory. God always gets what he wants. And what he wants is always the highest good for us. This is underserved, incredible, unbelievable grace! God did not choose you because you chose Christ; you chose Christ because God chose you! This is a pride killer for any who would want to be arrogant about their salvation. Now if you are wondering about all this and the Bible's clear statement that "whosoever will may come." I am reminded of what Moody used to say. When we come to the gate of heaven above the entrance will be written the words "whosoever will may come. And on the other side of that gate, which you can only read from the inside, is written: chosen before the foundation of the world." Human responsibility and divine sovereignty are like the rails on a train track. When you look at them up close the rails are separated from each other, but as you look out into the distance it seems as if the rails come together. There is much mystery in the Bible, but what we can know is that we can accept all that it says as fact. And so we know that all things are working together for our good -all the way from eternity past to eternity future!