

Unbreakable Power of God Securing Salvation

Romans 8:30-34

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Introduction: On July 5 of 1934, a diminutive 66-year-old widow from Switzerland and current citizen living in Illinois received the first payout at a new, monumental, and game-changing government program. Lydia Lobsiger¹ had raised two daughters who were now happily married yet struggling with employment, and had scratched to save **\$1250**, putting it into the Fond Du Lac State Bank in East Peoria, Illinois, trusting that it would get her through the rest of her life. But like so many in that era, this bank ended up closing its doors, shuttering the opportunity for people like Mrs. Lobsiger to get their hard earned money out. In fact, after the *Great Depression* of 1929, **9,000** banks would do the same thing, suspending operations and closing their doors, often causing the loss of life savings of people who trusted the institution. This was caused by BAD banks and lending practices, but also when investors lost trust, there would be runs on *healthy* banks, threatening to tear down the whole system.

After the four tumultuous years of massive unemployment, the President Roosevelt signed into law the Glass-Steagall Act, or the Banking Act of 1933, which included the FDIC ---- the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which covered deposits in banks up to \$2500, and insured more than \$11 Billion in overall deposits around the U.S.² This began to build both real credibility and perceived reliability of banks, incentivizing more people to put their money in banks. In fact, since the inception of the FDIC, no one has lost a dollar of their deposit, despite eras of modern bank failures. Lydia Lobsiger joyfully received a check to cover all \$1250, as well as the \$14 she had put in to her granddaughters account. Today, the Federal Government insures over \$11 **trillion** of investments, but only keeps \$161.1 billion on hand, and insures up to \$250,000 from individual investors. The **ONLY BASIS**, then, of confidence in this system is based on the **good name and full faith of the U.S credit and ability to deliver**. The government would theoretically dip into its own treasury to pay out what it insures. This has been said to be one of the greatest guarantees in the world.

A guarantee is only as good as the one backing it, which means almost everything in the world **CANNOT** be guaranteed. There is no guarantee that a surgery will be successful, or that medicine will work, or that there will not be side effects. There is no guarantee that educating your kids a certain way or sending them to the right college will determine a successful job or career. There is no guarantee that saving your money and investing conservatively will turn into a livable retirement. There is no guarantee of safety, long life, comfort, or lack of conflict in life. This is true because none these have been promised by God, who is the only one who can truly back up any statement or guarantee that He has actually made.

As we come to the end of **Romans 8**, we come to a conclusion of a section that has informed of the **work of the Spirit**, the reality of **suffering**, and the **assurance of salvation**. Now, Paul brings us back to the courtroom to ask several rhetorical questions, giving timeless answers, so that believers who love Jesus can know, without a shadow of a doubt, that there is **security in our salvation**, and that is based on God's **unbreakable power** and **inevitable keeping of His promises**. But Paul also moves from the seeming cold walls of the courtroom to the warm realities of God's love, which is what we will walk through next week.

¹ https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/52513342/lydia-schneider_lobsiger

² <https://www.fdic.gov/90years>

Unbreakable Power of God (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**.

Salvation in Christ is both a goal and a hope, dealing with the past, present, and future, and is by definition **transformational**, not merely additional to life. Salvation in the gospel of Jesus is both simply yet profoundly complex, being understood by the simple and yet a lifetime does not plumb its depths. The reason we start there is that there is often a **fundamental misunderstanding** about the nature of the gospel, and in that misunderstanding we can miss the power of Romans 8:30 and the reason Paul included it. If we think the gospel is **about us**, about mankind finding a way to reconcile themselves to God, or figuring out how to deal with their sin on their own, or finding a way to un-blind and un-dead ourselves on our own, through our own effort or some religious action, we will see Romans 8:30 as an affront to our personhood. We will see that God is **for us**, but He is absolutely **about His own glory**, and that is the central theme of redemptive history and salvation itself. The reason Paul gave for hope in the midst of suffering was that glory awaits in the gospel. The hope and assurance that we have in the midst of suffering is that God designed us to be **conformed to Christ** (8:29) and to one-day rule with Him in unity and under His preeminence. So Paul frames the next **theological truth about God in terms of salvation in light of suffering and security, giving us a guarantee based on His character and nature that we can bank on.**

Romans 8:30 is called “*The Golden Chain of Salvation*”, a five-fold sequence that is sure for **every believer in Jesus**. The reason why a chain is an apt picture is the fact that each of these truths are **inseparable from the other, and thus inevitable** for everyone who loves God and are called according to His purpose. It also displays an **unbreakable** power that God possesses to deliver on each one of these. Remember, God is the **subject and actor** of this section, and each of these steps are created and provided by God, not us. So let’s see how these work together to bring **hope and security**.

FOREKNOWLEDGE - We looked at this last week that this word means more than simply foreseeing the future, and does not mean that God looked down the corridor of time and saw some who would believe, choosing *that* group. No, God DOES see everything in the future, but here He is talking about a specific group, those that HE WOULD APPOINT. The “knowledge” part here is not mere cognition but personal relationship that is intimate and unique, giving both care and affection. We looked at the fact that God **chose Israel** in the OT (Deuteronomy 7:6-10) and *set His love on them as treasured possession*. In **Amos 3:2** it says that out of all the families of the earth, God *knew* Israel, using the term “*yada*”, which has the idea of covenant love and setting affection on. In **Jeremiah 1:5**, BEFORE Jeremiah was in the womb and has his parts formed:

*Before I formed you in the womb I knew (yada) you, and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations”*

Notice the overlapping idea here that God KNEW Jeremiah, one that HE would form, and actively **consecrated** (or set apart) and **appointed** (placed in His service) as a prophet. Intimate knowledge that sets love and affection on is a great way to describe *the foreknowledge of God*. As John Stott said, “*Whom He foreknew*” is virtually equivalent to “*whom He foreloved*”³ It is sovereign, distinguishing, unique, affectionate love for those that He would **predestine**.

³ John Stott, “*Romans: God’s Good News for the World*”, p. 249.

PREDESTINE – This is one of the more challenging and difficult truths in Scripture, but also one of the most glorious and precious. The word means “foreordain, determine, or appoint”. In the flow of the chain, God has **predestined** those on whom He has set His covenant love and affection. This takes into account the doctrine of man’s depravity, the fact that we are born into sin, and thus are **dead in our trespasses and sins... and were by nature children of** (or under) **wrath** (Eph. 2:1-3). In our nature of rebellion and loving sin, we COULD not choose to save ourselves because we had no desire or ability to do so. That is why it took the supernatural and divine work of God on our behalf, and it was up to His Sovereign, gracious, and free choice of us. Paul describes this act in Ephesians 1 this way:

Eph. 1:4-5 “even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love** 5 he **predestined** us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will

God both **chose** (to select) and **predestined us** BEFORE we existed, could choose, or were formed, and He did it out of **love**. There are three exceptionally important realities to point out before we move to the next link in the chain:

- 1) Whenever the idea of predestination not being **fair** comes up, remember this. If God were **fair**, He would merely judge each of us based on our earned standing of sin, and condemn each of us by His just wrath and righteous anger. We get the picture in our mind that God is a capricious God standing at the gates of heaven with mankind clamoring to get in, and He only lets in a few who learned the secret code. The reality is that we were all running our **hell-bound race**, racing head-long to Hell, turning our back in rebellion and loving our sin. It was this group that God saved. All were deserving of Hell, and everyone saved an object of God’s grace, but in all of it, God is just, good, and loving.
- 2) Are we called to choose, love, and seek forgiveness from God? YES! Are these action steps we must take? YES! Does that mean that we contribute to our salvation or that we work with God in it? NO! We love, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We believe and choose to follow Christ because of His grace given to believe (Eph. 2:8-9). There is **paradox here**, just like the idea of Trinity or authorship of Scripture (is Romans written by Paul or the Holy Spirit ---- YES). But though these seem incongruous to our thinking, Scripture is abundantly clear. When we respond to the gospel, it is because God has chosen or predestined us to do so.
- 3) *What is the purpose of predestination?* This is made clear in Romans 8:29 --- **to be conformed to Christ!** We know that we are secure in God’s choice through all suffering, accusation, doubt, and sin because God is doing all of it to make us more like Jesus. Predestination does not mean we are apathetic or unsure, but know EXACTLY what we are to be, do, and become in Christ.

CALLED – There are two kinds of *calls* that are made from the gospel ---- one *internal*, and one *external*. The external call of the gospel is one that goes out to all mankind through the proclamation of God’s people (Romans 10:14-16). But there also is an **internal** call that every believer in Jesus responds to (1 Cor. 1:2), called into fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9). Notice how this is clear in several passages:

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “14 To this he **called you** through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”

2 Timothy 1:9 *“who saved us and **called us** to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began*

Calling means a “summons”, an effectual call out of death and into life, from darkness to light. It is pictured in **Lazarus** coming out of the grave (John 11:43), where He cried out “**Lazarus, come out**”, and Lazarus did not reject it.

There are many questions and tensions we have with these first three truths, and admittedly some answers that are difficult to swallow, remaining in the field of tension. But in these tensions, we lean into **trusting a Sovereign, perfect, loving, and just God**, who sees all things and causes all things. We see the picture dimly, and our sin concaves all reality toward ourselves. Even if one rejects the beauty of these three acts of sovereign grace, **J.I. Packer**, in his foundational little book called “*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*”, pointed out that everyone actually believes God is sovereign in salvation:

*“In the **first place**, you give thanks to God for your conversion. Now why do you do that? Because you know in your heart that God was entirely responsible for it. You did not save yourself; He saved you... There is a **second way** in which you acknowledge that God is sovereign in salvation. Your pray for the conversion of others... You ask God to work in them everything necessary for salvation.”⁴*

If this is true, then salvation is truly up to God, for God, and a work of God alone. This means He gets all the glory, takes all the credit, and is the only object of worship. **His sovereignty guarantees security**. It was the only way to overcome our sin, to raise the dead, and allow unholy man to approach holy God. As we will see, NOTHING can separate us out from God because of this chain, so we rejoice, rest, and give thanks for it.

JUSTIFIED – We’ve looked at this truth throughout Romans, so we will not spend too much time here. But it makes sense that God **declaring us righteous** comes at the end of the chain, not the beginning. The effective call of God that comes out of His foreordained love and choice enables those who hear to believe, and those who truly **believe are justified by faith**. In the courtroom, justification is not merely acquittal or acceptance, it is a **declaration that sinners are now righteous** in God’s sight, because Christ has borne the weight and wrath of sin on Himself, giving us His righteousness and taking our sin on Himself.

GLORIFIED – Two things to point out about the end of the chain. 1) This is a bookend with the section before, where we look forward to the **freedom of glory** in the future, experiencing final adoption as sons, meaning the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:21-23). Glorification is the future hope of every believer, where Jesus sets everything right and we will reign with Him in bodies fit for eternity. 2) The word “glorified” here is in the *aorist*, not future tense. Paul is signaling that though we are experiencing sin and suffering now, our glorification is so sure, it’s like it’s already a reality in the present. It’s like your team being up 49-0 with 30 seconds left in the football game. There is still time on the clock, but it’s as good as over and impossible to change the outcome.

Impenetrable Promises of God (31-34)

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 **He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

*33 **Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.** 34 **Who is to condemn? Christ***

⁴ J.I. Packer, “*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*”, p. 126

Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

In order to summarize Romans 8, and perhaps the entirety of the first 8 chapters, Paul goes back into the courtroom, asking a set of rhetorical questions to clarify just how pervasive the security of our salvation is in Christ, before leaving with an emphasis on **love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**. We will take each question in order, and in doing so, we'll get a full picture of security that should strengthen each believer in assurance, boldness, courage, freedom, and joyful worship.

A Summary & Reframing: *“What then shall we say to these things?”*

It seems clear that Paul was caught between worship and instruction, from awe and wonderment to furthering the discussion with the Roman church. When Paul contemplated the greatness of salvation in light of the purposes of God, he would often break out in prayer and praise (see Eph. 3:20-21). He was speechless from the concept, but knew he needed to reframe and find more concrete concepts to help all of us comprehend the depth of our salvation so we can practically find security in it.

A Central Question: *“If God is for us, who is against us?”*

This is perhaps one of the most assuring sentences for believers in Scripture, since we already know that are multiple things *against us*! It acknowledges our plight that things are stacked against us, like our enemy Satan (1 Pet. 5:8), or the broken world that is set against us, or unbelievers who are enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18), or even our own flesh at times. We've listed out how we can suffer in this world, but we also know the world around us is NOT NEUTRAL, and our challenge is seeing those *people set against us as objects of love and the general call of the gospel*, rather than mere enemies.

But notice that Paul gives a *greater to lesser argument here* is what John Piper calls **“The solid logic of heaven”**, in that God overcame the greatest obstacle and most insurmountable roadblock and overcame it in our salvation, so everything else seems less surmountable. If God accomplishes the massive work of bringing back sinful man to Himself without compromising His glory or holiness, He can give us the grace in any and every situation for our good. This is because **God is for us, not against us**. It is exceptionally fearful if God is against you, but we know that in every pain, discomfort, anxious thought about the future, unknown outcome, harsh treatment, disappointing ACL tear, job decline, or frustration in marriage, God is for us, working out our good in Christ to make us more like Jesus.

The Massive Promise & Example: *“He did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things”*

If God is for us, *what did it cost Him?* He was willing to give **His OWN SON**, the One who was beloved (Matt. 3:7; 17:5; “the Son of His love” – Col. 1:13). Jesus is the pre-existent, co-eternal, not created, perfect image of the Father in whom all the fullness of deity dwells (Col. 2:9). I'm not sure I appreciated the level of intimate, infinite, and deep love that the Father has for the Son until I had daughters of my own. He loved those that He foreknew so much, and hated sin so much, and was willing to save from His wrath so much, that He **WILLINGLY** gave us **His OWN SON**. And this was no bloodless mission or peace, but required Jesus to splatter His own blood in gruesome pain, becoming a curse, so that God could **make a wretch His treasure**. Divine love for His own and infinite hatred for sin gathered at the cross, so that the obstacle of sin could be satisfied.

But how did this happen? Was Jesus duped? Did God blink and miss the plan? Far from it. It was God **predestined, predetermined, and sovereign plan for Jesus to go the cross**. Here is what we learn about God's sovereignty, man's responsibility, and the unbreakable promise of God:

Who killed Jesus? Who put Him on the cross? Judas delivered Him over to the Romans (Mark 3:19), Pilate gave Him up (Mark 15:15), Herod, the Jewish people, and non-Jews there gave Him up (Acts 4:27-28), and **we gave Him up** (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:24 – delivered for *our sins*). But Jesus was NOT deceived, overpowered, or outplayed, since He went willingly to the cross, and no one took His life from Him but He willingly laid it down (John 10:17; 19:30). Each person listed here was **responsible** for their part of Jesus going to the cross, but it was NOT their plan that played out, but God's:

Acts 2:23 *"this Jesus, delivered up according to the **definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**"*

God predetermined everything that would happen to Jesus, and yet that did not absolve any of responsibility. All that the Father chose, Jesus delivered (John 6:39; 17:12; 18:9), since His death and resurrection was the guarantee of the promise.

This is the greater. If God was willing to crush His Son, which somehow brought Him pleasure (Isa. 53:10) so that He could bring about the promises made in redemptive history, He is willing AND able to give us all things that we need to live a **secure**, gracious, thankful, courageous, fruitful, maturing, and whole-hearted life in Christ?!?!

We can live fearless lives, investing in the things that matter for eternity: God's Word and people, since we know that our lives are secure in the promises of God and work of Christ. If Americans can have assurance that their deposits are secure because of the good name of the USA, how much more assurance do WE have in investing in making disciples and seeing more and more taste and see that the Lord is good.