

- Foreknowledge is the equivalent of foreloved; to choose to love beforehand. When the Bible speaks of God knowing individuals, it often means that they are the objects of His affection and concern. God not only knew you before you were born; He knew He was going to love you! It is in this sense that God foreknew (Amos 3:2; Rom 11:2; Jer 1:5; Matt 7:22-23; 1 Cor 8:3; 2 Tim 2:19). When God foreknows a person, He chooses him to be a special object of His grace and love. It means that before time began, God chose to set His love on some, whom He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. We are chosen according to the exclusive saving love of God the Father (cf Rom 9:13).

(ii) *Predestination*

- God “also” predestines those He foreknew to be conformed to the image of His Son. There are not some who are foreknown, but not predestined. The word “also” applies to our calling, justification, and glorification as well. It indicates that these 5 links in this chain can never be separated. It’s a package deal.
- Predestination or “fore-ordain” means to “preplan a destiny” or “to mark out beforehand” (Eph 1:4-5; 1 Cor 2:7). God has previously determined the destiny of those whom He foreknew. The ones God chose for this special relationship called salvation were part of God’s preplanned program to bring them to accept Christ as Saviour. It occurred in eternity past. As soon as God made the choice to choose whom He chose, He predestined their salvation. Ephesians 1:4-5: “*In love, having predestinated us....*” V6: “*To the praise of the glory of His grace.....*” God is in control. He has a plan for your life and mine!
- God predestined Christians to be conformed to the image of Christ. The end in this process of our being conformed to the Son’s image is the exaltation of Christ: “*He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” This does not mean that Jesus as God’s Son had a beginning (cf Col 1:15-16). The term “firstborn” reflects His priority and supremacy. God called us and saved us in connection with His eternal purpose to glorify Christ. Our salvation cannot fail!

(iii) *Called*

- God effected our salvation by effectually calling us. He is only calling those whom He has foreknown and whom He has predestined. God calls (i) externally by the gospel & (ii) inwardly by His Spirit thus giving them life & faith.
 - The external call is the general proclamation of the gospel that goes out to all people (Rom 10:9-13; Matt 11:28; John 3:16; John 7:37-38; Rev 22:17). No one will ever be saved without first there being the external call (10:17).
 - There is a special sense in which God only calls those who truly respond to the general gospel call (Matt 22:14). This is the effectual call, the internal call. This is the call of God that penetrates the depths of the human heart. It always accomplishes God’s purpose of giving life to the spiritually dead so that they respond to the call by faith in Christ (eg. Lazarus).

So Secure a Salvation (8:18-39)

- Every person who has been born again is eternally secure in his salvation because of the plan and purpose of God.

1. The Promise of Future Glory (8:18-25)

(i) *Future Glory, 8:18*

- Paul compares our present sufferings with future glory to keep both in the right perspective. Paul is mindful that we are not immune to the daily realities of living in a fallen world, a world of sin. “Glory” refers to the future glory that awaits us in heaven. Paul wants us to remember 3 facts as we endure suffering:
 - Our present sufferings are relatively “short” compared to our eternal glory. The believer must not focus on today’s sufferings; he looks forward to tomorrow’s glory.
 - The glory to come far outweighs the sufferings of the present (2 Cor 4:17-18). Our pain will dim in the light of the glory God has prepared for us.
 - Our future glory with God is absolutely certain (Col 3:4; 2 Thess 2:14).
- If we keep our eyes on the future promised glory, we can endure present sufferings with patience and hope (Acts 7:54-60).

(ii) *Creation Awaits Deliverance, 8:19-22*

- Because of man’s sin in the Garden, the whole created universe is subject to God’s curse (Gen 3:17,18). Creation is personified as eagerly waiting for “*the manifestation of the sons of God,*” ie. the time when men shall be manifested in their glory as God’s sons (1 Jn 3:2). The whole creation is “*subject to vanity*” because of sin - it is subject to decay, disease, death, destruction.
- God pronounced the curse; yet along with it He promised hope. Paul looks forward to a time when the total effects of sin will be done away, and creation will stand forth in all its glory as God intends it to be. Even as believers will know release from pain, weariness, and decay in their resurrection bodies, so the whole of nature will experience renewal (Rev 22:1-3; Isa 11:6-9). Until that day comes, creation groans and labours in pain like a woman about to give birth. Creation has the promise of liberty and a new existence to be fulfilled in the millennium reign of Christ and ultimately in the new heavens and new earth.

(iii) *Believers Await Glory, 8:23-25*

- Not only is creation looking for future glory, so are believers. We have the “*first-fruits of the Spirit.*” A first fruits is a 1st instalment or down-payment (Lev 23:10-11); it carries with it the thought that there will be latter fruits. The gift of the Holy Spirit is but a foretaste of what is to come - that we are God’s children, and that eternal glory will be forthcoming. The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste of what heaven is like. He is the down payment guaranteeing our full adoption as God’s children and the release of our bodies from sin and suffering.

- Believers are also groaning in eager anticipation for “*the adoption*,” described as “*the redemption of our body*.” That will be when we receive our redeemed bodies – a new glorified body (2 Cor 5:1-2). Full salvation includes the redemption of the body (or the full and final deliverance from all consequences of sin). Now, by God’s Spirit, we are *able not* to sin; but in glory we will *not be able* to sin. This, and all the glory of heaven, is our hope. This points to the security of our salvation.
- The believer does not get frustrated as he sees and experiences suffering and pain in this world. He knows that the temporary suffering will one day give way to eternal glory (Tit 2:13). Biblical hope is a deep settled knowledge grounded in the promises of God Who cannot lie. Because it is certain that God’s promise will be fulfilled, we can patiently await its fulfilment (1 Thess 1:3). The key to persevering in suffering with hope is to keep our eyes on the future glory.

2. The Holy Spirit’s Intercession (8:26-27)

- The Holy Spirit sustains us by personally aiding us in our infirmities or weaknesses. He helps us by interceding for us. Many times, we really don’t know what we should specifically pray for (Jas 4:3; 2 Cor 12:8-9). The Holy Spirit is our Helper in prayer. In the midst of our burden, our longing and our perplexity, the Spirit within us comes to our aid. He intercedes for us. He translates our perplexities into petitions.
- The Spirit’s intercession is with groanings that words cannot express. Groanings refers to intense, yet inaudible, sighing.
 - It does *not* refer to speaking in tongues. The groaning here does not refer to the sound made by men but by the Holy Spirit’s intercessory ministry.
 - It is an anthropomorphism, which is to attribute human emotions to God. For example, when the Bible says that God repents, it is speaking from a human point of view. To us, it seems as if God changed His mind, although His counsel is fixed from all eternity. In Psalm 78:65, the Psalmist compares God to a warrior who awakes from being drunk!
- The Spirit not only helps us know what to pray, but also prays for us Himself. God the Father, searching our hearts, understands the Holy Spirit’s prayer. Such prayer is always answered because it is according to the will of God. Things sometimes work out far differently from our wishes and expectations. Yet those unexpected developments may be God’s answer to the true prayer offered from within us by the Holy Spirit. We have a prayer-hearing & prayer-answering God because of the Spirit’s intercession.

3. The Purpose & Plan of God (8:28-34)

- Romans 8:28 begins with a very strong affirmation: WE KNOW! The phrase “*all things work together*” (or, co-operate together) is translated as “together worked or energized,” where we get the word “synergy.” God in His power and

His providence causes the things in life, even things that seems haphazard, to synergize, to co-operate together. Each experience may not be good, but together they work together for our good (Jer 29:11; Gen 50:20).

- While Romans 8:28 is a source of great comfort, it is often misunderstood and misapplied. We often interpret what is “good” from a narrow and materialistic perspective. Paul is NOT saying that the tragedies and heartaches of life will always produce a better set of circumstances. The “good” that God brings about is not necessarily comfort or happiness. From God’s perspective, “good” must be defined in spiritual terms. God’s purpose for believers is that we conform to the image or likeness of Jesus Christ (v29). The “good” that Paul is talking about is that we be like Jesus. Fashioned in His image. Conformed to be like Him. It means to be progressively moulded into the character of Christ and this inner transformation is seen in our outward behaviour. To paraphrase v28: ‘All things work together for the ultimate good purpose of making us like Jesus.’
- “All things” includes the good things that God gives us, but it also includes “*the sufferings of this present time*” (v18), as well as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword (v35). In His gracious providence, God will work these terrible things together for our good as we submit to Him and trust in Him. The ultimate good is God’s glory, and He is glorified when His children live as Christ did. Quote: “God will sometimes allow what He hates in order that He may accomplish what He loves.” In all of it, God is working for our ultimate good, to conform us to the image of His Son, who learned obedience through the things that He suffered (Heb 5:8). Though we may carry heartaches to our graves, we know that an incomparable glory awaits us for all eternity.
- The promise that God will work all things together for good is only for His elect, whom He purposes to save. Paul describes them in 2 ways: (i) those who love God; (ii) those who are called according to God’s purpose. God is working all these things together for good for us because our salvation is part of His eternal purpose to exalt His Son. Since He will not fail to accomplish that purpose, our salvation is secure. To carry out His purpose, God has established what theologians have called “God’s Golden Chain of Salvation.” There are five links in this unbreakable chain of salvation. Scripture is clear and unambiguous that if God has saved us, He will keep us to all eternity.

(i) *Foreknowledge*

- Our salvation began in eternity past when God foreknew us. Foreknowledge does NOT mean that God looks down the tunnel of time to see who would choose His Son and, on the basis of this foresight, predestines and sets into motion the process of salvation. The theology behind this view would mean that God made up His eternal purpose based on what sinners would choose to do, rather than on what He would do. It makes man sovereign, not God. Salvation would not be according to God’s purpose, but rather according to man’s will.