

## Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF  
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

### Bound With A Golden Chain<sup>1</sup>...

#### Romans 8:29-39

For those of you who have not yet seen the movie *Luther*, there is a wonderful scene in the movie where the five of the crowned representatives of the nation of Germany argue for Protestant faith before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Now in the movie, the scene is a public scene rather a private one and is an example of cinematic license in which two historical scenes are combined into one. But that does not minimize, to my way of thinking, the bravery displayed in the scene. Anyway what happens in the movie is that the Emperor commands these brave royal representatives of the nation of Germany to submit to Catholicism and they resist and finally one of the older men, the margrave of Brandenburg, steps forward and bows on his knees and sticks out his neck and says, **"I will not submit and rather than submit, you may take off my head."** In the movie, the other representatives ambled forward slowly and dropped to their knees and pleaded the same exact thing. The Emperor Charles was beside himself complete befuddled as to what to do next.

Now as I said earlier, there was a bit of cinematic license in the scene but not much. In fact, I thought this morning I might read a section from Merle D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation* describing the actual event. Would that be all right?

The princes of the Romish party were allowed to retire; but Charles, the Holy Roman Emperor, had given a sign to the Elector of Saxony, to the Landgrave of Hesse, to George, margrave of Brandenburg, to the Prince of Anhalt, and to the Duke of Luneburg, to follow him into his private chamber. Only the emperor's brother Ferdinand, who was to serve as interpreter, went in with them. Charles thought if he could get them alone, he could get them to do his bidding. **"His majesty requests you to discontinue the sermons,"** said Ferdinand. On hearing these words the two elder princes (the elector and the margrave) turned pale and did not speak: there was a long silence. At last the landgrave said: **"We entreat your majesty to withdraw your request, for our ministers preach only the pure Word of God, as did the ancient doctors of the Church, St. Augustine, St. Hilary, and so many others. Of this your majesty may easily convince yourself. We cannot deprive ourselves of the food of the Word of God, and deny his Gospel."** Ferdinand, resuming the conversation in French, translated the answer for the Emperor. Charles could not have been more displeased. He was especially displeased by the references to Hilary and Augustine; his face flushed with anger. **"His Majesty,"** said Ferdinand in a more positive tone, **"cannot desist from his demand."** —

**"Your conscience, has no right to command ours,"** replied the landgrave, As Ferdinand still persisted, the margrave, who had been silent until then, could contain himself no longer; and without caring for interpreters, stretched out his neck towards Charles, exclaiming in deep emotion: **"Rather than allow the Word of the Lord to be taken from me, rather than deny my God, I would kneel down before your majesty and let him cut off my head!"**<sup>2</sup>

Now I don't know about you but I love that. There is something wonderful about a man's boldness when it is based upon the gospel, when it is based upon a love for the doctrine of justification.

Of course, though the centuries other men have also resisted. Other men have refused to bow the knee to tyranny or even to the threat of tyranny. Other men have been emboldened to face the mouths of emperors and the mouths of lions.

Listen, to this wonderful little description of dialogue between John Chrysostom and an unbelieving Roman king.

When Chrysostom was brought before the Roman Emperor, the Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, **“Nay, you cannot banish me for this world is my father’s house.”**

**“Then I will slay you,”** said the Emperor. **“Nay, you cannot,”** said the noble champion of the faith, **“for my life is hid with Christ in God.”**

**“Then I will take away thy treasures.”** **“Nay, you cannot for my treasure and my heart is in heaven.”**

**“Then I will drive thee out from among men and you will have no friend left.”** **“Nay, you cannot, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you cannot separate me.**

**Therefore, I defy you; for there is nothing you can do to hurt me.”<sup>3</sup>**

Now, where does that kind of boldness, that kind of unflinching, unwavering faith come from? Does it come from endless hours of spiritual discipline in which a person buffets their mind and body? Does it come through the building of the intellect or educational advancement? Does it come because a person pays their dues ecclesiastically? No, it comes when the Spirit of God takes the truth of the gospel and emblazons it on a man or woman’s heart. Now those other actions may follow but they will never in themselves produce the kind of reverential awe and gratitude and stability that the internal witness of the Holy Spirit can.

You see boldness, evangelical boldness, comes not out of anything we do but rather out of a realization for what God has done for us. Now, as far as I am concerned, no verses in the Bible engender this kind of boldness more than the those found in Romans 8:29-30. Turn there if you would.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:29**...For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Now as a bit of background, I ought to tell you that these verses have affectionately come to be known and to be referred to among Reformed commentators as the “**golden chain of redemption**”. Now there are two reasons they have come to be known that way, I think.

The first reason they have come to be known that way is because of the structure of the two verses. You see what happens is that Paul takes the predicate of his first sentence and makes that predicate the subject of the next sentence. Then he takes the predicate of the second sentence and makes it the subject of the third sentence and so on. Literarily, this particular construction is called “**sorites**”.<sup>4</sup>

Let me give you a practical example of a “**sorites**” construction.

I have quit playing golf.  
The reason for that is simple.  
I needed a ball and I went to the store and purchased one.  
And that which was purchased was struck.  
And that which was struck flew.  
And that which flew landed.  
And that which landed splashed.  
So I quit.

Now do you see what I mean? The predicate of the first sentence focuses on the word “**purchased**”. “**Purchased**” then becomes a part of the subject of the next sentence and “**struck**” becomes the new predicate. In the next sentence “**struck**” becomes a part of the subject and so on, till the end. Now Romans 8:29-30 is structured just like that.

Let's take a look together.

For those God foreknew he also predestined...  
And those he predestined, he also called;  
those he called, he also justified;  
those he justified, he also glorified.

Now you can see that this **"sorites"** construction means that each line is intimately connected to the previous line and because they intimately linked some commentator along the way thought to himself, **"You know this is just like a chain or series of interlinked steps."**

Listen to how the great Princeton lion, B.B. Warfield, puts it.

These five golden links are welded together in one unbreakable chain, so that all who are set upon in God's gracious distinguishing view are carried on by His grace, step by step, up to the great consummation of that glorification which realizes the promised conformity to the image of God's own Son.<sup>5</sup>

Listen also to Dutch Reformed commentator, Wilhelmus à Brakel:

By comparison it is evident that it was because their names were written in the book of life, as is confirmed by the golden chain of salvation, out of which not one link can be removed. Those whom He has foreknown, predestinated, called, and justified, he has also glorified (Rom. 8:29-30).<sup>6</sup>

Finally, listen even to longtime Moody Bible Institute professor, Alfred Martin:

Every link was forged in heaven, and not one can ever be broken. This blessed portion is not for theologians to wrangle over but for the saints to rejoice in.<sup>7</sup>

Now there is a second reason that this construction is called a **"golden chain"** and that reason is tied to the Greek mythology. You see in Homer's *The Iliad*, Homer recounts a wonderful argument between Zeus and the rest of the gods in

which he has Zeus say something to this effect, **“My power is so much greater than yours that if there were such a thing as a golden chain and all the gods were on one end and I was on the other and they tried to pull me out of heaven. All I would have to do is pull sharply and they would all be yanked up into my presence.”**<sup>8</sup>

Now, obviously, that is from the realm of Greek mythology but here’s my point. The ancient commentators took that literary concept or figure of being connected to heaven by a golden chain and sanctified it and made it a part of their vocabulary and when they did, they concluded that the real golden chain was right here in Romans 8:29-30.

Now, I don’t know about you but I love that. I love that imagery. Now, what I want to do this morning is spend a few minutes looking at this marvelous **“golden chain”** and then I want to look farther and see what Paul’s conclusions are in light of the truth this **“golden chain”** contains.

One way to keep this straight is to remember this. The **“golden chain of redemption”** contains five links that answer four crucial questions. Did you get that? The **“golden chain of redemption”** contains five links that answer four crucial questions.

Now let’s look at link number one: the foreknowledge of God. Now, I have to tell you this first link is the link that is most controversial. In fact, it is even more controversial than the second link which is predestination. Now even though that is true, that is that it is the most controversial of the links, there are really only two ways to understand this particular word. The first way to understand it is that God looked down the corridors of time and saw what an individual was

going to do or decide in terms of their faith and then reacted to what He saw that they were going to do. Theologically, this idea is referred to as God's "**prescience**" and you can see why that word is used. The word "**prescience**" is formed of two parts, the prefix "**pre**" and the word "**science**" and the idea is that God "**pre-knows**" or "**foreknows**" whatever is going to happen. Historically, that view is called the Arminian view of God's prescience. Now I am an ordained Presbyterian minister, and obviously do not hold the Arminian view but I do admit and admit gladly that of the word "**foreknow**" is actually used that way twice in the New Testament. Would you like to see where it is used that way? First it is used that way in Acts 26:5.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 26:5**...They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.

There Paul is appealing to his enemies to testify that since they "**knew him before**" that is, since the "**foreknew**" him they could attest to his having been a strict Pharisee. Now obviously, this use is not apples to apples. Paul is not saying that they knew him before he was born or anything like that. He is simply saying, "**You knew me back when...so speak truthfully about the way I was.**"

Now the second place it is used in this same manner is 2 Peter 3:17. Look there for a minute.

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Peter 3:17**...Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.

Now you can see that there Peter is admonishing those reading his letter by reminding them of all the things Paul had written and by reminding them that

there were those who wish to subvert the truth. His point is that since they know these things, that is since they **“foreknew”** these things in advance, they ought to be prepared to react to them rightly.

Now the other three places the word **“foreknow”** is used in the New Testament it is used to speak of God and cannot mean the same thing it does in these two passages. Take for example 1 Peter 1:20:

**NIV 1 Peter 1:20**...He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Now the word **“foreknow”** is translated here in the NIV as **“was chosen”** and the reason for that is pretty obvious. Peter is referring to the fact that Christ was known relationally by the Father before the foundation of the world but that He has only been revealed to us who love Him now fully in these last days.

I think the word **“foreknow”** is used that same way the other two times it is used in the New Testament. Obviously, one of those two other uses is here in Romans 8:29; the other is in Romans 11:2. But we'll deal with the use of **“foreknow”** in Romans 11 when get there. Now what I want to argue this morning, is that the word **“foreknow”** here in Romans 8:29 does not mean, **“pre-know the facts”** but rather to **“pre-love the person.”** Listen to the way Calvin puts it

But the foreknowledge of God, which Paul mentions, is not a bare prescience...but *rather* the adoption by which he had always distinguished his children from the reprobate.<sup>9</sup>

So I am arguing that when Paul applies the word **“foreknowledge”** to God, he is not talking about God's prescience, but rather about the fact that God sets His affections on certain individuals and **“knows”** them in a relational way as

opposed to just knowing the facts about them. You see what I am arguing is that Paul understands the word **“know”** in an Old Testament sense. That is, Paul takes in the word **“know”** in same sort of sense implied in the verse **“Adam knew his wife and she bore a son.”** (Genesis 4:1 ... יָדָע ) Now, obviously, Adam’s relationship with Eve involved a sexual union and I am certainly not implying that is the case with God but I am implying that there is an intimate union, a relationship based upon a kind of knowing and affection that marks it as being very different than the relationship of those who don’t know this kind of intimacy.

Listen to what James Dunn says here:

*Paul* has in view the more Hebraic understanding of **“knowing”** as involving a relationship experienced and acknowledged;<sup>10</sup>

And listen to John Stott:

Other commentators have therefore reminded us that the Hebrew verb **‘to know’** expresses much more than mere intellectual cognition; it denotes a personal relationship of care and affection. Thus, when God **‘knows’** people, he watches over them, and when he **‘knew’** the children of Israel in the desert, what is meant is that he cared for them. Indeed, Israel was the only people out of all the families of the earth whom Yahweh had **‘known’**, that is, loved, chosen and formed a covenant with.<sup>11</sup>

Listen to John Piper:

Because of all those texts I think John Stott and John Murray are exactly right when both of them say, **‘Know’**. . . is used in a sense practically synonymous with **‘love’**...**‘Whom he foreknow’**...is therefore virtually equivalent to **‘whom he foreloved.’** Foreknowledge, is **‘sovereign, distinguishing love.’** It’s virtually the same as set your affection on and choose for your own.<sup>12</sup>

Now let's look at a few Old Testament verses where this very idea of **"knowing"** is present.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 18:19**...For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

Now where is the word **"know"** in this passage? Well obviously, it is in the **"chosen"**. The NIV translates it chosen because of the implications of God's **"knowing"** Abraham. But the verb is **"know"** and the idea is that God has a special relationship, a special love for Abraham and as a result is going to direct His children to keep his way and as result of that, the promise of God will be upheld.

Now look at Exodus 1:8.

<sup>NAS</sup> **Exodus 1:8**...Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Now let me ask you. Do you think the Pharaoh, the new Pharaoh of Egypt, was an idiot, an intellectual pea-brain? Do you think he lacked any understanding of where Joseph and his descendants acquired their land in Egypt? I certainly do not think that was the case. I think it means that a new Pharaoh came into power that had no affection, no relation to Joseph or his people and thus had no intention of fulfilling the promises or vows that had been made to him in the past.

Now, look at Jeremiah 1:5 where the Lord reminds Jeremiah of His love and affection for him.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Jeremiah 1:5**... "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

It's the same with Hosea 13:4 and 13:5.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hosea 13:4**... "But I am the LORD your God, *who brought you out of Egypt*. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Savior except me.

Now the Lord knew that the Israelites knew about all other kinds of gods in the world. He was angry with them because they knew there was Dagon or a Molech or a Ra or even a Baal. The Lord was not concerned that they knew about other gods, which were not really gods at all. The Lord was angry that they had relationships with other gods.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hosea 13:5**... I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat.

And that phrase, "**I cared for you in the desert**" is the in verse 5 is the same phrase, "**I knew you**" and the point is the same as with all the other verses we have looked at. The Lord "**knew them**" and "**cared for them**" and set His affection on His people and He has a relationship with them and knows them and will not let them go.

And it is the same in Deuteronomy 7, which to my way of thinking is one of the most beautiful expressions of God's love in the entire Bible.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 7:6**... For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. <sup>7</sup> The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup> But it was because the LORD loved you...

Now I have been arguing and going through a number of Scripture passages to make the point that **“foreknow”** here in Romans 8 means to **“forelove”**. Now you may be asking yourself, **“Why is he spending so much time on that?”**

I want to answer that question and I want to answer it even if you are not asking it. You see the arguments go one of two ways. If a person is an Arminian and doubts the sovereignty of God in these sorts of things then they usually say something like this, **“Well you are making ‘to foreknow’ and ‘to predestinate’ mean the same thing.”**

I want you to see that I am not doing any such thing. I am arguing that **“to foreknow”** means **“to forelove”** and not **“to predestinate.”** God’s predestination of a certain individual comes out of the fact that God pre-loved that individual. **“To predestinate”** and **“to foreknow”** mean completely different things.

In fact, I think Arminians have a much tougher time coming up with a definition of **“to predestinate”** than Calvinists do coming up with a definition of **“to foreknow”** and I’ll show you why. You see if you make **“to foreknow”** mean to **“look down the corridors of time and to see in advance”** then what possible meaning can you ascribe to **“to predestinate”** other than to say that God rubber stamps our own choices. You see making **“to foreknow”** mean to **“look down the corridors of time and to see in advance”** guts the possibility have God being anything other than a lackey to the will of man and I don’t think the New Testament allows that.

Listen to what John Stott says:

Since the common meaning of **‘to foreknow’** is to know something beforehand, in advance of its happening, some commentators both ancient

and modern have concluded that God foresees who will believe, that this foreknowledge is the basis of his predestination. But cannot be right, for at least two reasons. First, in this sense God foreknows everybody and everything, whereas Paul is referring to a particular group. Secondly, if God predestines people because they are going to believe, then the ground of their salvation is in themselves and their merit, instead of in him and his mercy, whereas Paul's whole emphasis is on God's free initiative of grace.<sup>13</sup>

To that, the great Baptist Charles Spurgeon add this sobering thought:

Our text begins by the expression, "**Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate,**" and many senses have been given to this word "**foreknow**" though in this case one commends itself beyond every other. Some have thought that it simply, means that God predestinated men whose future history he foreknow. The text before us cannot be so understood, because the Lord foreknows the history of every man, and angel, and devil. So far as mere prescience goes, every man is foreknown, and yet no one will assert that all men are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Do you see his point? God foreknows everything and every person and yet not all people are predestined and the Scripture clearly says that those He has foreknown he predestines. You see Spurgeon's point is this. Paul is not arguing that God "**foreknows**" events; everybody knows that He does that. No, what Paul is arguing is that God "**foreknows**" or "**foreloves**" individuals and that it is that affection that is the basis of the divine act of predestination. Oh, how I love Donald Barnhouse's words here:

Let us leave all these trivial concepts and come out into the clear light of the Scriptures. God's foreknowledge is an advanced determination to carry through a plan which He has eternally purposed in the counsels of His own will, and which is carried through without variation because the Lord brings to all that He has thus determined and decreed. God's foreknowledge is not advance knowledge of something which I shall

choose to do but God's foreknowledge is God bringing to pass in me something which He has planned for me.<sup>15</sup>

Now let me rush on and introduce these other four golden links. Look at verse 29 again.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:29**...For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

That is those God "**foreloved**" he destined in advance to be conformed to the image of His Son and He did that Christ might not stand alone as His beloved but that He might stand as the first and best of many sons and daughters. You see the point is that God wants to bring honor and dominion to Christ and the means by which He has determined to do that is by creating behind Him many sons and daughters who look to Christ as their great champion and defender. Oh, it's a lovely picture don't you think?

Now in verse 30, Paul presents the final three links in this golden chain.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:30**...And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Now calling here has to mean effectual calling. That is, the calling here is that calling which inevitably leads to response. It is not a calling that goes forth hoping someone will respond; it is a calling that will lead with certainty to someone responding. It is the kind of calling Jesus spoke of in John 10:27 when He said:

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 10:27**...My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Now I think I ought to add that these first two links, “**foreknowledge**” and “**predestination**” occurred in the mind of God even before the creation of the world. These final three links occur, however, in time and space where we live.

Anyway, the last two links “**justification**” and “**glorification**” you already know from previous lessons. Obviously, justification is that wonderful declarative act of God whereby...

<sup>wsc</sup> **Question 33**...he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, strictly on the basis of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

And glorification is the culmination of God’s saving work in which we shall be finally transformed into the image of the one who saved us. We will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.

Now, just to repeat what Paul has said, let me do an interpretive translation:

For those God foreloved he also destined to salvation even before they were ever born...And those he predestined, he also actually and effectually called to Himself in a saving way; and those he called to Himself, he also declared to be righteous and holy in His sight for no other reason that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to them through faith; and those he declared to be righteous in Christ, he also glorified and though this glorification is still unfinished in time and space, is in God’s good and holy purpose and plan as good as done and thus spoken of as a completed act.

Now, when you understand the fullness of the implications of what Paul has set forth in this “**golden chain**” in Romans 8:29-30 it seems to me that there is an overwhelming tendency to be dumbstruck by the kindness of the boundless love of God. I think that is the reason that Paul poses the four or five questions he

lays out in verses 31-39. I think he wants us to both intellectually and emotively draw out the implications of what he has been saying. I think he wants us to come to some conclusions and I think those conclusions are staggering.

Now, before we actually look at those questions I have to tell you there is some disagreement in the commentaries about just how many questions Paul actually asks here. If you look at the text in English, there are at least six questions raised maybe seven. But if you look at the text in Greek, there are really only four major questions raised with perhaps two minor, follow up questions added. Now, I say that because in Greek there is a four-fold repetition of the little interrogative pronoun τίς. There is one at the end of verse 31. Then is one at the start of verse 33, 34, and 35. And in Greek, they sort of jump off the page in a steady repetitive drumbeat...who, who, who, who. Now, obviously there are at least two other questions asked but they asked using different pronouns and, I think, are really just follow up questions to finish out Paul's thought and implication. Now look at verse 31.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:31**...What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Now let me ask you a question, When does Paul mean when he says in response to this? In other words, what is the thing that he is hoping will cause a gut-level response in us? Well I think the answer has to be this **“golden chain of redemption.”** That's what he has been talking about. In other, he is saying, **“If God has foreloved us, and predestined us and called us and justified us and guaranteed out glorification, what ought to be our response? What ought we to say?”**

Paul thinks we ought to draw a conclusion and here is that conclusion.

**Well, you know if that is true then who can be against us? I mean if that is true what does it matter who is against us?**

Now in verse 32, he fleshes that thought out by drawing an obvious conclusion.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:32**...He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Do you see what He is asking? If God has given us the thing that He loves most why is that we think he is going to be miserly with the insignificant stuff.

When I was in seminary and we were dirt poor, instead of buying one really large present for our kids, Beverly used to buy lots of small presents for the kids and wrap each one so that there would be a sense of scale. That is we gave them lots of small presents to make them think they were getting a lot. But God has done it exactly the opposite of that. He has given over the best thing, the most important in all creation for us and He has done that right from the start, so we ought never to think that He is miserly or withholding from us whatever is best for us.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:33**...Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

If God has declared us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Jesus, who is able to level any charge against us? When Satan comes before God and says, **“Did you see what your child did?”** God will say, **“I don’t have any idea what you are talking about? I have already declared that precious child of mine holy and harmless. They are covered over with the righteousness that I require. Are you blind?”**

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:34...** Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Now to finish out that same thought, Paul asks, **“Who can possibly condemn us? Think about it. Jesus, the one died...no the one who died and was raised...no the one who died and was raised and is sitting at the right of God...He’s the one pleading our cause and if that is true what does it matter that someone condemns us.”** The answer is, **“It doesn’t matter at all.”**

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:35...** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: **“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”** <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Now you ought to notice that Paul is not saying that there will never be any adversity. He is not saying that at all. He is saying that there will most certainly be adversity but that we will run roughshod over it. When we come to a realization, a full realization of the love of God in Christ poured out upon us, we will begin to trample adversity under our feet. We can do that; we can live like that because we know we are the objects of the boundless love of God. You see the answer to the question, **“Who shall separate us from the love of God?”** is the same as to all the others, **“No one. No one. No one. No one.”**

Then Paul draws his final conclusion in verse 38-39...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 8:38...** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You know there is not much I can say about that at this point that you don't already know so let me do this. Let me read to you again a living illustration of the truth of Romans 8 but repeating the story of Chrysostom I read at the beginning.

When Chrysostom was brought before the Roman Emperor, the Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian. Chrysostom replied, **"Nay, you cannot banish me for this world is my father's house."**

**"Then I will slay you,"** said the Emperor. **"Nay, you cannot,"** said the noble champion of the faith, **"for my life is hid with Christ in God."**

**"Then I will take away thy treasures."** **"Nay, you cannot for my treasure and my heart is in heaven."**

**"Then I will drive thee out from among men and you will have no friend left."** **"Nay, you cannot, for I have a friend in heaven from whom you cannot separate me."**

**Therefore, I defy you; for there is nothing you can do to hurt me."**<sup>16</sup>

Lets pray.

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<sup>1</sup> The origin of the phrase **"golden chain"** is difficult. It probably initiated with Homer's Iliad when Zeus spoke to the other gods declaring his superiority over them. **"Take a golden chain, hang it from heaven. Let gods and goddesses, all together, grab hold of one end of it and pull. You'd not drag Zeus, most high counselor, down from heaven to the ground, never, no matter how hard you tried to do it. But when I wished to pull in earnest, I'd yank up the earth itself, the sea as well. I'd loop that chord round some Olympian peak, suspend it in mid-air--the whole of it. That's how much stronger I am than gods and men."** (Book 8...translated by Ian Johnston, Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, BC. The idea is that the gods were securely bound to Zeus inseparably and he could pull them up to heaven before they could pull him out of heaven.) Cf. Justin Martyr's *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*, Ch. 24; Origin, *Origin Against Celsus*, Book 6:42. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, Homily 15. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*, Homily 9..."Secondly, of great humbleness of mind: For it is like a golden chain; if one have hold of the beginning, all will follow." Cf. Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine: The Oration of Eusebius*, Ch. 6. See also: Thomas Watson (died 1682) mentions the term in 9.1 of his *Divine Cordial*. William Perkins (1558-1602) also wrote a book called the *Golden Chain or Causes of Salvation and Damnation*. The phrase is also used in the Canons of Dordt (1619): First Head of

Doctrine, Rejection 2 where it is linked to Romans 8:28-30. See also: John Owen, "The Doctrine of the Saint's Perseverance" in *Works of John Owen: Volume 11.3.2*. "That their calling here mentioned is the effectual call of God, which is answered by faith and obedience, because it consists in the bestowing of them on the persons so called, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh, is not only manifest from that place which afterward [it] receives in the golden chain of divine graces, between predestination and justification, whereby the one hath infallible influences into the other, but also from that previous description which is given of the same persons, namely, that they love God, which certainly is an issue and fruit of effectual calling, as shall afterward be farther argued; for to that issue are things driven in this controversy, that proofs thereof are become needful."

<sup>2</sup> J.H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation* (Book 14, Chapter 4) Reformation History CD Rom. This event took place June 5, 1530.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1991), 171. He quotes Henry Hart Milman, *The History of Christianity* Vol. 4, 1881. Modernized slightly by me.

<sup>4</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 176. "God's purpose of grace is set out in verses 29 and 30 by means of the construction called 'sorites', in which the logical predicate of one clause becomes the logical subject of the next. Here the new creation, a community of men and women conformed to the image of Christ is seen to have been from the beginning the object of God's foreknowledge and foreordaining mercy."

<sup>5</sup> B.B. Warfield, Pamphlet, "Election", p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelmus à Brakel, W. 1996, c1992. *The Christian's Reasonable Service, Volumes 1 and 2 : In which Divine truths concerning the covenant of grace are expounded, defended against opposing parties, and their practice advocated as well as The administration of this covenant in the Old and New Testaments*. Published in electronic form by Christian Classics Foundation, 1996. (electronic ed. of the first publication in the English language, based on the 3rd edition of the original Dutch work.). Soli Deo Gloria Publications: Morgan PA

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Junior Martin, "The Sovereignty of Grace as Seen in Romans 8:28-30" quoting H.A. Ironside's Commentary on Romans in *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 99* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1942), 455.

<sup>8</sup> See endnote 1.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, 8:29.

<sup>10</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 38a: Romans 1-8*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher) 1998. Dunn continues: "...hence commentators regularly and rightly refer to such passages as Gen 18:19, Jer 1:5, Hos 13:5, Amos 3:2, and IQH 9.29-30, whose influence elsewhere in the Pauline correspondence is evident..." <sup>NIV</sup> **Genesis 18:19**...For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by

doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." <sup>NIV</sup> **Jeremiah 1:5**... "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." <sup>NIV</sup> **Hosea 13:5**... "I cared for you in the desert, in the land of burning heat." <sup>NIV</sup> **Amos 3:2**... "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins."

<sup>11</sup> John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World*, (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 248-9.

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, "Foreknown, Predestined, Conformed to Christ" sermon on Romans 8:28-30 from his sermon series on Romans. (Bethlehem, Minnesota: Bethlehem Baptist Church, August 4, 2002), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Stott, 248.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Spurgeon, "Glorious Predestination," from the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Vol. 18, preached March 2, 1872, 225.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 3: God's Grace 5:12-21 and God's Freedom 6:1-7:25 and God's Heirs 8:1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1959, 1961 and 1963; reprint 1994), Part 2, 160. See also Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group) 1999. "The reason why this word is used to denote the Divine determinations is because the foreknowledge of God necessarily implies His purpose or decree with respect to the thing foreknown. For God foreknows what will be, by determining what shall be. God's foreknowledge cannot in itself be the cause of any event; but events must be produced by His decree and ordination. It is not because God foresees a thing that it is decreed; but He foresees it because it is ordained by Him to happen in the order of His providence. Therefore His foreknowledge and decrees cannot be separated; for the one implies the other. When He decrees that a thing *shall* be, He foresees that it will be." And see Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will" in *Luther's works, vol. 33 : Career of the Reformer III* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia. "For God to will and foreknow are the same thing."

<sup>16</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1991), 171. He quotes Henry Hart Milman, *The History of Christianity* Vol. 4, 1881. Modernized slightly by me.