

Being Conformed to the Image of His Son

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[0 : 00] Well, I want to welcome everybody back to Men's Night.

I haven't seen a number of you since last year, and it's good to have you guys here. We're going to continue our multi-year study of Salvation God's Way.

And we're going to continue to look at perseverance of the saints. We find ourselves tonight in a very enviable position because we've come to the two verses of Scripture that support, defend, and define persecution of the saints.

And I'm speaking of Romans 8, 29, and 30. Now, to be sure, there are other passages that touch on this great and important topic.

And we're not going to get through the entire Romans 8 passages tonight. But in past lessons, we have visited some of these key passages.

[1 : 21] And I just want to do a real quick review. John 6 is particularly important and one of my favorite chapters in all the Bible.

And in verse 35, starting there in John 6, 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.

But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out.

Now, focus on that. All that the Father gives me will come to me. For I've come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day.

[2 : 40] And elsewhere in chapter 6, we read this in verse 44. No one, how many? No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise Him up on the last day.

And we hear this in chapter 6, starting in verse 47. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the man in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

And then a final section in chapter 6 of John's Gospel, starting in verse 60. And when many of his disciples heard it, they said, this is a hard saying, being the bread of life.

[4 : 00] Who can listen to it? But Jesus, and also he told them that you can't come to me unless the Father draws you. And they said, this is hard. But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples, and they were his followers, were grumbling about this.

See, they didn't say that out loud. This is a hard saying. They were thinking that. But they were thinking in front of the omnipotent God. They were grumbling about this.

Said to them, do you take offense of this? Offense of this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life.

The flesh is no help at all. That's our flesh, guys. It's no help at all. The words that I've spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.

For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

[5 : 18] And then the saddest sentence in Scripture. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

That was more than they could handle. The masses went away. Just the core was left. Just the core. I'm also sure that we remember the words of our Lord in the great chapter 10 of John's Gospel.

John 10, 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. Now remember, we're talking about perseverance of the saints.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, they follow me. And then we come to Romans chapter 8. And tonight, verses 29 to 30.

Listen to these words. 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.

[6 : 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. That's amazing. This is referred to as the golden chain of salvation.

We go from foreknowledge, to predestination, to the called, to the justified, to the glorified.

And this is essentially the pattern we have been following for two and a half years in our Bible study in here as we look at the Ordo Salutis, Latin for the order of salvation.

This is the order of salvation. Now, I have a confession to make tonight. I'm doing it because Diane's not there. I only confess when my wife's not in the room. But Mike always tells her what I said.

[7 : 35] For years, I was confused about something in here. Why did the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of these words, why did he leave out one of the key ingredients of God's plan of salvation?

I'm speaking of sanctification. That's part of it. That's the very process we are undergoing tonight. I hope you guys are being sanctified by what we learned.

I know I am. And we're presently being sanctified as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then a few months ago, I was reviewing this section of Scripture, anticipating, and this is back in like September, anticipating that we'd be here one night.

And I'm looking at this, and all of a sudden, one of those verses just, is it leaped or leapt? It jumped. It jumped off the page at me.

Has that ever happened? You read a passage over and over and over, and then one time it just, God hammers it home. And it just leaped, leapt off the page at me.

[8 : 58] Sanctification is not there just by name. But it's in there. I found it. And let me read it to you once more. It's the first part of verse 29.

For those whom he foreknew, he also be predestined, and listen to this, to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Being conformed to the image of Christ Jesus goes by another name. It's called sanctification.

You and I are being recreated in the image of Christ. Now let me put it in context. This isn't in your notes. I'm throwing this in for free.

No charge for this. You remember back when we talked about justification by faith? We talked about it for 19 weeks. And by the way, the pastor and I got invited to preach on justification by faith to a group of pastors in India.

[10 : 05] And we can do it from my youngest son's house because it's on Zoom. But we're going to talk in February about justification by faith if we put all that together.

And remember when the Lord himself takes you through a gate called the gate of justification.

God does that. It's salvation is God comes down to us, born from above. Greek word, anathen, from above. We go through that gate and we find ourselves on a road.

It's called sanctification highway. Now it's right next to a much bigger highway that leads to destruction. But we're on the sanctification road.

Every true believer is on sanctification road. We all travel at different speeds. All of us.

[11 : 17] And don't be critical of me because I'm lagging way behind most of you. We all are at different speeds on that road. But we're all on that road.

Now sometimes people take two steps forward or step back. Sometimes I take two steps forward and three steps back. But we're on that road. That's being recreated in the image of Christ.

It is the process we enter into. The very moment of our rebirth. You are at that moment placed on that sanctification road.

You may not know it. I didn't know it. For a long time I didn't know it. I was ignorant of all this. I got saved late. So the golden chain that we're talking about tonight in 29 and 30 contains all the major ingredients of salvation.

Every one of them. And there's something quite interesting about all these words found in Romans 29 and 30 especially in that word foreknow or foreknowledge.

[12 : 26] The church has been arguing over the meaning of that word for generations. And it's arguing over it today.

I call it the church divided. I've got good friends and we argue about this. I win but still. It's an argument.

They wouldn't tell you that I won though. So what is the argument? Many in the church. A lot of people. And I would say the majority. The majority of people.

Would describe salvation based upon Romans 8 29 and its use of foreknowledge or to foreknow in this manner.

This is how they would describe it. God looked down the quarters of time. And they might use the word tunnel. Dan's smiling. He knows where I'm headed.

[13 : 28] The tunnel of time. God looks down that tunnel. What's he doing? He's looking. He's back in eternity. And he's looking forward.

He's looking forward to the 400 ADs. The 1400 ADs. He's looking forward to 2021. And he is looking for those individuals who are going to pray to receive Christ.

And he's looking for those individuals that are going to reject Christ. In other words. God is looking for people who are going to choose to believe in Jesus.

And he sees that person looking forward from eternity past. And they're praying some form of a sinner's prayer in order to be saved.

That's the argument. That's the majority of the church holds to that. And we're going to spend some time looking at foreknowledge. The foreknowledge of God.

[14 : 37] And we need to know that what this is and we need to know what it is not. Here's a quote from the late Dr. James Montgomery Boyce. And I think it's very helpful. He was arguably one of the greatest, if not the greatest theologian of the 20th century.

And Dr. Boyce said this, It is not our choice of God that matters. It is God's choice of us. When we consider the words that I read to you describing foreknowledge and the majority view in the church, God looking down the corridor or tunnel of time to see who's going to believe and then predestinating them based on what he saw to eternal life, it really sounds like a neat package.

And it really sounds reasonable. And we can be sure that there have been some fine men in history who held to that theology. Before he embraced reformed theology, Dr. Sproul held to that.

Adrian Rogers held to that. Steve Lawson used to believe that. I don't think Dr. MacArthur ever did, but I think his father Jack MacArthur did. Tom Holland used to believe in that.

It just seemed like a really neat package. The fact is that many and perhaps most people assume that divine foreknowledge means God's foresight into the future events.

[16 : 15] As a result of that conclusion, foreknowledge may be the single most misunderstood doctrine or attribute of God in all the Bible. people who hold to this see God as observing what decision people will make concerning his son and that frees God up to choose them, to elect them, if you will.

And when God the Father sees someone choosing Jesus, then now he's free to choose them. That's the majority opinion.

But if that's true, there's several problems with it. And one of them is, then God's choice is dependent upon man's will and ultimately man's choice.

Never leave salvation in the hands of a fallen man. And we were all fallen at one time. Dead in trespasses and sins. You don't want to leave salvation in the hands of a dead man.

But again, this seems to be a very logical scenario. But in this belief system, if you really run it out, the individual determines his or her own destiny.

[17 : 36] It's determined by the individual. God's role is really reduced to that of waiting to see what decision each person makes.

Whatever a man chooses, God can then rubber stamp that choice or that decision by electing them based upon the individual's decision to follow Christ.

And God saw that from eternity past. That's the argument. In this scenario, salvation is not God's choice.

Rather, it is a choice of men. One person has described this as man in the front seat behind the steering wheel, driving his own destiny. God is in the back seat as a passive observer looking out the window as events unfold.

And probably worrying about whether this is a good enough drive or not. There are a number of problems with interpreting divine foreknowledge in this manner.

[18 : 45] Insurmountable problems. The main problem with what I've described to you in five pages tonight, the main problem is it's entirely false.

I can't stress that more. And that may have been, that probably offends somebody here who holds to this, but that's okay. Because when we're through this week and next week, you'll understand at least what I'm talking about.

The main problem is the fact that people assume that foreknowledge means foresight. God's looking foresight.

And again, that has God predestinating people based on what the man does or the woman. Upon close examination of Scripture and the application really of logic, biblical logic, the foresight view of salvation collapses under its own weight.

There are in fact a number of reasons why the foresight view is far from what the Bible teaches about God and about man. So not only what it teaches about God, what it teaches about you and I.

[20 : 04] Let's talk about the first problem. Now remember, we're addressing people that believe, well, he looks down the tunnel to see who's going to pray to receive him.

Then he elects him. That's what the belief is. Problem number one. God never learns anything.

You grasp that? God never learns anything. That's a simple statement. It's only four words.

But those four words are deep in meaning. I'm going to repeat it. God never learns anything. God has never.

And God will never peer into the future in order to see what is going to occur. It won't happen.

[21 : 10] Why not? He doesn't have to. He doesn't have to. Why? He's omniscient. He's omniscient.

He knows everything. Everything. On my paper, I've put those three words in bold type and underlined them. God is omniscient.

Because God is omniscient, he knows all things eternally and immediately. Immediately. And it's really important that we understand this truth.

Vitally important. God has never peered into the future and learned anything unknown to him. And you know, I used to think about myself.

I'd do something stupid. Most of you that know me well know that's a great possibility. Now, Mike's been there. We kind of trade off to who's done something more stupid that day than...

[22 : 15] And I'm thinking, God's got to be sitting there saying to his son, can you believe what he did? No, we didn't see that coming. Well, yeah, he did too.

He did. He never looks into the distant horizon of time and discover what he did not previously know.

If God chooses to peer into the future, he can do so because he's God. But all that he would see is what he has already foreordained before the foundation of the world.

He foreordained it all. Down to us being in this classroom tonight. He foreordains it all. God says that he stands at the beginning and we don't know...

When's the beginning for God? Eternity. He stands at the beginning and declares the end from the beginning.

[23 : 18] I want to read to you out of the fifth gospel. You know what the fifth gospel is? Yeah, you do. Isaiah. Isaiah. Isaiah. Listen to Isaiah chapter 46.

Verse 9. Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is no other.

I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, saying, my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose.

Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. Now what does that mean? I have no clue. But I understand this next sentence. I have spoken and I will bring it to pass.

I have purposed and I will do it. all of it foreordained by God. God does not merely observe the end from the beginning.

[24 : 31] He declares it. Get hold of that. Okay? He declares it. That means that before time began, God sovereignly declared that the future would come to pass.

God does not have to look into the future in order to learn anything. He knows it all.

So, like I said, that other view collapses under its own weight. What would God be looking for?

What would God be looking for?

He knew Jerry was going to believe. He poured that into Jerry. He poured that into all of us. He poured that into Mike. He poured it in to the pastor, to Dan, all of us.

There's another reason, though, why the foresight view is incorrect. Let's just suppose that God did peer into the future and examined every man and woman, what would he see?

[25 : 48] Well, we can sum that up in one word. Unbelief. Unbelief. That's what he would see. By looking into the future, all God would ever see in all of humanity is unbelief.

No one, if left to themselves, would ever believe in Christ, they would never choose Christ. Jesus told us in John 15, 16, you didn't choose me.

I chose you. He told us that. The total depravity of the human heart includes the bondage of the will. Our will is all bound up. Where did that happen? It happened in the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden.

And by the way, on Wednesday night, I'm teaching in here, on the fall in the Garden of Eden. That's what we're going to be talking about as we go through the great passages of Scripture in the Bible.

[26 : 57] Well, what happened there? We received a new nature. We got a new nature.

And God had a name for it. It was a sin nature. The wellhead of the human race was poisoned at the foot of the tree when our parents ate the forbidden fruit.

And everything that has flowed out of that wellhead has been tainted with sin. Everything. I love an example that Dr. Stanley used one time.

He said, you tell your beautiful little granddaughter. Now, Grandma's got to go in the other room, honey. Don't touch Grandma's lamp because I'm afraid you'll break it.

What's she going to do when Grandma leaves the room? She's going to touch that lamp. If Diane told me not to touch it, I'm going to touch it. I mean, it's in our nature to do that.

[28 : 07] You know, so we don't have to teach kids to sin that get old enough? We don't have to teach them that. We don't. We were infected.

The entire human race was infected in the Garden of Eden with a sin nature. Now, what was one of the byproducts of that? As a result, no one will or can choose to believe in Jesus Christ by His own initiative of will.

And we're going to get into more of that next time. We're not through yet. But we're getting closer to almost 30 minutes into this. We talked last year about the two-sided coin of salvation.

Repentance and faith. Repentance and faith. Probably faith and repentance would be better. Both of those are grace gifts of God. God grants us repentance.

God gives us the faith with which to believe. God must give those things to a guilty sinner before he can embrace Christ as Lord and Savior.

[29 : 20] And I want us to consider these verses of Scripture that support that. The first one is in Acts 11, verse 18. When they heard these things, they fell silent and they glorified God, saying, this is a Jewish audience, then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

How did the Gentiles get eternal life? God granted them repentance. The same thing He did for Jews. It comes from God.

We didn't conjure up our repentance any more than we conjured up faith. Why not? Sin nature.

Blocked sin nature. Ephesians 2, verse 8 and 9, you all have it memorized.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, 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. And you know, people argue, they said, okay, what's the gift of God? Grace or faith? You know what my answer is? Yes. Both.

[30 : 42] He gives us grace and He gives us the faith to believe. It's a gift. And no one can... What would we do as fallen people? We'd boast, wouldn't we? You might be saved, but I'm more saved.

I did more works than you. I remember the story. It was 110 degrees in Phoenix, Arizona. Kind of mild for that place. This little lady on the street corner was peddling the watchtower in the Jehovah's Witness magazine.

And she had a Jehovah Witness Bible. A preacher walked up and said, and it's a mistranslation, but some of it they left in there from the original. He said, can I read you a passage?

And he read of that passage. And when he asked her, he said, what are you doing out here in this heat on the street corner? I said, I'm trying to work my way to heaven. He read of that passage. And she said, I'm over 80 years old.

What am I doing out here in this heat? If that's what the Bible really says, what am I doing out here? I'll never forget that. I saw that. They had a camera going and watched her say that. Philippians 129.

[31 : 53] 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.

We like the first part. Maybe we don't care for the second. But listen, it's granted to you to believe in Him. That's what we're talking about here. That's not foreknowledge where God's looking down the corridor of time.

God granted salvation so that His children could believe in Him. Hebrews 12.2. Looking to Jesus. Now listen how the writer describes Jesus. The founder and perfecter of our faith. We didn't found it and we didn't perfect it.

If God's waiting for me to perfect my faith, it's got a long wait. The founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[33 : 09] 2 Peter 1.1. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours.

How do we obtain that? By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. It's His righteousness.

His work. He did it. And then 1 John 5.1. Everyone who believes, that's the Greek word pistou, means trust, commits their life to, it's much stronger than the English counterpart.

You guys believe that chair's going to hold you up. May it or may not, but you believe it is. That's not the belief here. This is trust. Life commitment.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

[34 : 15] That's a rich passage. If we believe, we've been born of God. It's only through rebirth that we can believe. And then not only do we love the Father, we love the church.

How many people do you know that just leave the church full of hypocrites? Anyone ever say that to you? Tell them. There's room for one more. If the church is full of hypocrites, we can take you because we've got room for one more.

Every human that has ever lived or ever will live is described as dead in trespasses and sins. A dead man has no ability to do anything.

He can't make a move toward God. A dead man can't breathe. A dead man can't move. A dead man can't think. All he can do is lay still and decay.

That's what dead people do. A spiritual corpse cannot believe in Jesus Christ. Why? Because it's dead.

[35 : 27] And we're all described at one time as dead in trespasses and sins. Jesus had to breathe life into us. I remember a great debate that Dr. Sproul, the late Dr. Sproul, had with Norm Geisler from Dallas City, and they were good friends.

And by the way, it's now, I think, the late Norm Geisler, I think he passed. And Norm's position was this. Look, I believe a lot of what Dr. Sproul teaches but here's how I picture Jesus.

He hears there's a man out in the Pacific Ocean. And we're going to put him over the Marianas Straits because they're so deep. You know, if you sunk Mount Everest in the Marianas, it would be one mile from the surface of the water, the top of Mount Everest.

That's deep. 35,000 feet or more. 39,000 feet. And Norm says, and Jesus hears there's a man out there and he's floundering around.

He's going to drown. Jesus gets in a boat and they go out there. I don't know how. Boy, that guy had to flounder around a long time. They get out there and Jesus sees him.

[36 : 38] And Jesus throws a life ring to him and says, just grab that life ring. And then Dr. Geisler's position was, but that man still has to swim a couple of feet, reach out, and take that life ring.

So it's either, you know, it's 95% God and 5% man, you know, whatever, but he has to do that. And then it was Dr. Sproul's turn. Dr. Sproul said, your analogy is pretty good to a point. Yeah, Jesus goes out there, but he discovers that man is laying on the bottom of the Mariana Strait. 38,000 feet below the surface. Dead as a mackerel. And that was Dr. Sproul's words. He said he's dead as a mackerel. Jesus jumps in, swims down, and he can do that, he's God. Swims down, picks up that lifeless body, been down there for a week, swims to the surface, puts him on the deck of the boat, and breathes life into him, and the man is born again, reborn. [37 : 56] He said, that's the meaning. That's the meaning. We were dead, and he made us alive. There are other results of unbelief, and we're going to get to those next time.

Thank you.