

The Golden Chain Of God's Purpose

Romans 8:29-30

Pastor John Miller

We're going to back up one verse because I want to read these three verses together. They rightfully should be studied together. Paul the apostle says, verse 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In Romans 8:28, Paul made it clear that God has a great and good purpose for all Christians, and He is working all the circumstances of our lives together for our good and for His glory. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." As wonderful as Romans 8:28 is, I believe Romans 8:29-30 is even more amazing because they tell us what God's good and perfect purpose and plan is in working in our circumstances of life. It's funny that Romans 8:28 is so well known, so loved, and most of you can quote that verse; but very few can quote verses 29 and 30, yet verses 29 and 30 explain verse 28. A lot of popular verses have been taken out of context and greatly misunderstood. Tonight we're going to have the blessing and the benefit of taking Romans 8:28 and tying it together with verses 29 and 30.

Whenever you are studying a verse, always read before and always read after the verse to understand what it's about. One of the cardinal rules of interpretation is context, context, context, context. Amen? Always take a text in context. Someone said, "A text out of its context becomes a pretext," and you can make it say what you want it to say. When we read that God works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, the question is: What is the good that God is working? What is the good purpose that God has in my life? It doesn't say, "...we feel...;" it doesn't say, "...we see...;" it says, "...we know." We know it by faith, and by faith we know that God has a purpose and God has a design.

In Romans 8:29-30, we have what has been called a "golden chain of five links" or five undeniable affirmations. They are five undeniable, unbreakable affirmations. I like the concept that they are a chain. Each one of these five links was fashioned and made by the hand of God. In these five links, we are going to see salvation from eternity past to eternity future. They are deep theological concepts, but I believe they are understandable and very practical. Don't shy away from this text thinking that it's beyond my comprehension. It's obviously in the Bible for our good and for our benefit. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. In these five golden links, Paul traces God's saving purpose from eternity past to eternity future. It began our salvation in the mind of God, and it culminates in the glorification of those who are saved. Let me mention this, I'll probably mention it a few times through but it's not in my notes and I don't want to forget this, each one of these links in this chain are made and fashioned by God. As we look at salvation in this text from eternity past to eternity future, there is no reference, no focus, no idea of man playing a part or a role in salvation. There is a

part we play, and I'll bring that in, but it's not in this text. The Bible emphasizes that salvation is of the Lord. From beginning to end, it is a work of God. We do not save ourselves, God saves us. Amen? We receive that salvation, but the ability to do that is even the work of God in convicting us and drawing us by the Holy Spirit and by His grace allowing us to see our need of Him and responding in faith so that we might be saved. When we get to heaven there will be no credit to us for our salvation. All praise, all honor, all glory is unto God who saves us from beginning to end.

In these chain links, we're going to see the believer's security rooted in the unchangeability, faithfulness, and grace of God. What are the five links? We read them in verses 29 and 30, but let me mention them for you. The first is foreknowledge. The second is predestination. The third is calling. The fourth is justification, and the fifth is glorification. Now, let's look at them one at a time. First of all we see, verse 29, that God by His foreknowledge actually placed His love upon us. That's the first link in this chain. It says, "For..." that beginning word in verse 29 indicates that it is a continuation from verse 28. So, "...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Here's the explanation, "For..." the rationale, the outflow of verse 28, "...whom he did foreknow..." let's just stop right there and gain an understanding of what it means when God "foreknew" us. The common view often of this is that it means God knew beforehand who would believe in Him and, based on that, He chose them. I don't believe that's what Paul is teaching in this term "foreknew." He's not saying that God, in His omniscience, looked forward in eternity and time and saw that you one day would repent, believe in, and trust in Him and based on that God chose you. That would, in essence, undermine the doctrine of election.

Election is completely God's work and God's doing. We don't do anything to influence God to choose us. God didn't choose you because you're intelligent. God didn't choose you because you're good looking. God didn't choose you because you have influence. God didn't choose you because you're charismatic and He needed you on His team. The Bible says God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. I just thought I'd encourage you. God looked down and said, "There's a foolish thing. I'm going to choose that. That's a candidate for My glory. I can be glorified through that person's life," and He chose you and He chose me—foolish thing, weak thing, base thing, despised thing so that no flesh would glory in His presence. Well, if it doesn't mean that God simply looks forward in time and chooses us based on our actions, what does it mean?

The word literally comes from two words, fore-knowledge. We get our word ginosko or knowledge from it; "fore-" meaning before, and "knowledge" or former knowledge, but the word is used to convey the idea of relationship of intimacy and love. Let me give you an illustration. In the book of Genesis it says Adam knew his wife. We know that in context that phrase is used for sexual intimacy. It doesn't mean, "Hi. I'm Adam. Glad to meet you. I thought we should meet each other since we're married, you know, I thought it'd be nice that we introduced each other, so I'm Adam." "Hi. I'm Eve." "Glad to know you. I'm glad we're married," kind of a thing. No. It speaks of the intimacy that they had in their marriage. It goes beyond just an intellectual knowledge. It speaks of a love relationship and intimacy in knowing another person. I believe

that this phrase expresses much more than intellectual knowledge, that it denotes a personal relationship of care and affection. It is used in what is called the Septuagint. If you've never heard that term before, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and they made a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in Greek. It's known as the Septuagint. It uses this phrase and has the idea to take note of or to fix and regard upon, or to fix one's interest upon. Let me give you a couple of references, Hosea 13:5 where God said, "I did know thee..." referring to Israel, "...in the wilderness, in the land of great drought." God didn't just know them intellectually, but God had chosen them. They were His people, they belonged to God. In Amos 3:2 it says, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." The NIV translates that, "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth," which is a fascinating insight into that concept of foreknowing.

I believe that this idea that did God foreknow us, simply stated, is God choosing us. It's another way of saying that God chose you but conveyed in the idea is that God chose you by setting His love upon you. I don't know about you, but that just blows me away that God would love me and actually choose me or set me apart and make me His own. Salvation starts with the elective purposes of God based upon His love and upon His grace. God's foreknowing us means that He fixed His attention, His love, upon us sovereignly. It's also, as I said, called election. Let me give you one reference, John 15:16. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have..." what? "...chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." If you're a Christian tonight, let this glorious truth sink down deep into your heart—God chose you! God chose you! You say, "Well, wait a minute, wait a minute. I walked down the aisle. I prayed a prayer to accept Christ," or "Someone led me in the sinner's prayer and I made that decision." That's not what this verse is talking about. The Bible teaches that we must believe, we must receive, we must repent, and we must trust in Christ, but the Bible also teaches, and a lot of people don't like this, a lot of people wrestle with this, and a lot of people don't like it because they can't understand it. I've learned to accept what I don't understand. As a matter of fact, I don't understand a lot, so I've got to accept a lot of things I don't understand. If I only accepted what I understood, I wouldn't accept very much. There's a lot of things that I accept, use, and enjoy that I don't understand, and one of them is that God would choose me. I wouldn't have chosen me. There are a lot better people that I think He could've chosen. I don't know if I would've chosen you either, if I were God, but God did, and He chose you because He loves you. He chose you because of His grace. You didn't do anything to deserve to be chosen. You didn't do anything to deserve to be His child. God chose you simply by His love and by His grace. Amazing!

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:4 that "...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..." before the world was ever created, God foreknew you, or God set His love upon you and chose you by His love and by His grace. Some people say, "Well, that's not fair that God would choose others." We're going to see in a few minutes that the Bible teaches a "whosoever" will, let him believe and he can be saved. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you're just sitting there saying, "I don't know if I'm chosen." Well, believe in Jesus and He'll forgive your sins, and then you'll know you're chosen. "Well, what if I'm not

chosen?" Then, believe in Jesus and receive Him as your Savior and you'll be forgiven and you'll find out you were chosen. "Well, what if I'm not?" Well, then, that's your problem. You're not listening to me. The Bible says, "Whoever will come to Me," Jesus said, "I will in no wise cast out." That's a promise. That's not just, "Whoever is elect can come to Me," it's "Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." I'm going to blend this all together, but we need to move on.

What is the second link in this chain of our salvation? It's God's predestination. This is the word that gives a lot of people problems as well—election and predestination. Notice in verse 29 it says, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate..." election and predestination are not the same thing. A common mistake that people make is they don't differentiate between the two. They don't understand the difference between predestination and election. Just as "foreknow" is two words, fore-know, or to know beforehand, so is "predestination." You have "pre" which means before and "destination" which means your destiny. Before God determined, so it would be predetermine, God predetermines what He's going to do with those whom He elects. That's the simplest and best way I know how to define predestination. It's kind of like God saying in a very homely kind of way, "Now that I've chosen him, what do I do with him?" What He does with them is conforms them into the image of His Son, and His Son is going to be the firstborn among many brethren which means the exalted One, the glorified One, the preeminent One.

Some of you are looking at me like you've totally lost it all. God chose you, and God was just looking at you and says, "Now, what do I do with him?" Do you ever wonder what God is doing in your life? Do you ever wonder why God has allowed certain circumstances in your life? Have you ever wondered what's going on in your life? This verse is telling you right now. It's telling you that God has predetermined what He's going to do with you. Ultimately, what He's going to do with you is to glorify you, and you're going to spend eternity in heaven with Him! That's good news. Amen? That's what He's going to do with you. It's a process of changing you into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. That's called sanctification, but Paul doesn't use that term in this passage. He says that He has predestined or predetermined. God has not predestined, God has not predetermined for anyone to go to hell. That's called double predestination. The Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible doesn't teach that God chooses some people to go to heaven and He purposely designs to pick some people to go to hell. That's not taught in the Bible, so double predestination is not taught. He didn't choose anyone to go to hell.

Predestination is only used for believers. That's an important note to write down. Only Christians are predestined, and the purpose that God has designed in predestination is to conform you into the image of His Son, look at it in verse 39. In verse 39, Paul goes on to say, "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He's going to conform us into the image of His Son and nothing can hinder that, nothing can thwart His purpose. Notice in verse 29, our text, He says, "...he also did predestinate..." us in the context there, "...to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be..." that is, the Son, "...the firstborn among many brethren." He's

working to make us like Jesus Christ, and Jesus might have the preeminence, (the Greek word is *prototokos*, it means the exalted one) that He might be the glorified One. This truth, this doctrine, should do three things. It should humble you, it should bring you assurance, and it should foster a love for God and a desire to live a life pleasing to Him. You got that? If you're studying the doctrine of election and predestination and all it does is puff up your head then you're not getting it. If it doesn't humble your heart...a true and a right understanding of this doctrine should humble and assure you that what God has begun in your life God is going to finish and complete. What an awesome thing that is!

You know, whenever you're studying a doctrine, one of the ways to determine whether that doctrine is truly Biblical or not is what effect it has on your life. Doctrine is not intended to exalt us, doctrine is intended to humble us. Doctrine is intended to make us more like Jesus and to give us a humble heart. It's not intended to exalt or magnify us or to swell our heads. If you know somebody that is walking around proud of their knowledge, then they don't really know the Word of God. They don't really know anything. You show me somebody that really understands these doctrinal truths, and I'll show you someone with a humble, grateful heart. It's not going to swell your head, it's going to humble your heart.

There is a third link in the chain, it hasn't stopped yet, this is God's calling in time. The cool thing now is in verse 30 we go from eternity past, God set His love upon us, foreknew us, and predetermined what to do with us—make us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ; but now in history and in time our experience was God called us. All three, so far, are the work of God. God foreknew us, God predestined us, and God called us. Notice verse 30, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also...,” what? “...called.” Now, with calling we move, as I said, from eternity past to the present time. The call of God is the historical application of His eternal predestination. The word “call” literally means to call in or to call unto. It comes through the preaching of the gospel. A lot of people say, “You know, if you believe in election and you believe in predestination, then there's really no need to preach the gospel.” Not so. The God who has ordained the end, the salvation of sinners, has also ordained the means to that end, the preaching of the gospel. Don't forget that. The God who has ordained the end, the salvation of sinners, has ordained the means to that end that they hear by the preaching of the gospel. How are they going to hear unless there's a preacher? How will they preach unless they be sent? How beautiful the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace. The means by which sinners come to Jesus is by the preaching of the Word. No doubt, you're here tonight because someone shared Christ with you. You heard a sermon, you read a tract, or you read the scriptures. A mother or father or a family member, someone told you about Jesus and led you in the sinner's prayer or invited you to come to Christ. There was the sharing of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, and you heard the gospel and came to Him for salvation. In time, God called you through the preaching of His Word.

This calling has been put into two categories. The general or universal call is the first, and the second is the internal specific or effectual call, as someone liked to refer to it. The general call is that Jesus stood on the great day of the feast, John 7, and said, “If anyone's thirsty...,” notice the word anyone, “...let him come to Me and drink.” All you gotta do is say, “I'm thirsty,” and

drink and you can come to Him. That's a universal call, but God comes to you by the Holy Spirit specifically and convicts you of your sin and your need for Jesus Christ. This is the call of God, the work of the Holy Spirit.

I'll never forget, I just got out of high school, a young man, and the strangest thing began to happen to me. All of a sudden I began to think about God. I began to sense my need for God. I began to feel a sense of my sin, and I understood that where I was going with my life was wrong. I was headed in the wrong direction. I just felt empty inside and somehow I got ahold of a Bible. I began to read and, even though I'd been raised in church, as I read the Bible God jumped off the pages like never before. I found myself repenting, turning to God, and praying. It was like, "What's going on? This is just bizarre." A few weeks earlier I'm hanging out with the guys, partying, chasing the worldly scene and doing what I want, and all of the sudden I'm in my room reading a Bible, praying, and I'm asking God to forgive me. It's like, "How did this happen?! I didn't ask for this! I wasn't looking for this." It was God's Spirit coming to me and calling me. Jesus said, "No man will come to Me unless the Spirit draws him."

I believe the Holy Spirit comes and sometimes we say He's knocking at the door of your heart. Sometimes you think it's the burrito you ate. I've just spent the last week eating taco salad, this big 'ol honkin bowl of taco salad. I love it! It was so good! My wife made it. It was great. She didn't eat any, I ate the whole thing—breakfast, lunch and dinner for about five days! So, if I look a little weird, pray for me. Sometimes you think, "Oh, it's the burrito I had," or "It's indigestion." No. It's the Holy Spirit. You might be here tonight feeling a little uncomfortable. You're like, "These people are creepy. They sing and they clap and they worship God and all this Bible talk. This is just a little too weird for me." God's Spirit is speaking to you and He's saying that you need Jesus. If you don't turn to Him and you were to die tonight, you would go to hell. You'd be separated from Him, that you're not forgiven, and you're not ready to go to heaven. He convicts you of your need of Christ and your eyes begin to open. Spiritually, you begin to see your need of Christ. That's the Holy Spirit, I believe, drawing you to Jesus Christ. I believe if the Spirit is calling you, you need to respond. That's the effectual call where we respond to the call of God's Spirit and trust Him and believe and we are saved.

I'm just going to mention something that's, again, a controversial point because we are on this doctrine. I'd love to spend a lot more time on it, but I don't want to bore you. I want to mention that, in Christianity, there are two basic camps on these issues when it comes to election, predestination, and calling. One group is known as Calvinist, or reformed theology, and the other group is known as Arminians. They kind of stand on two ends of the spectrum. The Calvinist and the reformed theologians emphasize the sovereignty of God and the work of God in salvation. As I've been teaching this passage tonight, there is no doubt some of you that are listening saying, "Man, the pastor's a Calvinist. The pastor's a Calvinist." On the other side of the coin there is what's called Arminians. Their focus and emphasis is man's side, that you have free will to believe or not, that you can resist this calling, that you can say no to God, that you must believe, you must repent, you must receive Jesus Christ and after receiving Christ, if you're not happy with your salvation, you can give it back and go back to your old ways. I've made a very, very big deep issue that good Christians on both sides of the spectrum have

debated and argued over for many, many, many years; I've just touched a couple quick simple points, and people that are really into this issue would probably laugh at what I just said because I'm not going into one position or the other in any depth.

My position is that there is truth in both spectrums. There is truth in both spectrums. Even though Paul says that God foreknew you, predestined you, called you, justifies you, and glorifies you, there are many passages in the Bible that say you must believe, you must repent, and you must believe and trust in Jesus Christ. The indication is that we believe and receive salvation by faith. On the other side of the coin, the Bible teaches that God chooses us, we didn't choose Him. So people are like, "Did I choose Him or did He choose me?" You say, "Which is it, Pastor John?" I believe that both are taught in the Bible and need to be understood. You say, "Well, they can't be both. It has to be one or the other." That's why people camp on these two sides of the spectrum. I believe that whenever there's doctrine in the Bible that seems irreconcilable, you can't seem to put together with your little pea brain, it's called a finite mind, I believe that they reconcile in a higher unity that God knows, God understands, and God sees. I'm willing to let God worry about it, not me. I don't have any problem with accepting both—that God chose me but I have to believe. I do believe it's God's convicting and work of the Spirit that calls us. I do believe that it can be resisted. I don't believe in what is called irresistible grace. I believe you have free will and you can resist Him. You say, "Okay, then you're an Arminian, aren't you?" No, I'm not because I also believe that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end, and if I'm saved, all glory to God, I have nothing to do with it. You say, "No, no, no, no. We're not going to let you off the hook. You can't do that that easy." Why not? I believe they're both taught, they're both in the scriptures, and I'm not going to have a mental nervous breakdown trying to reconcile the two. I don't have to reconcile friends. There's no issue there. If I try to explain away election, I can lose my salvation. If I take the other side of the coin, trying to figure it out, I lose my mind. I just decided to accept them both. I will tell you the crux of the matter. I said I wouldn't go into this but I gotta do this, okay. I can simplify this really simple.

The Calvinist believes that regeneration has to happen in your life before you can believe in Jesus Christ and be saved or justified. The Arminian, the more Biblicist in the middle, (which I find myself) is, I believe, that faith happens the moment you are regenerated; but regeneration, if I had to put one in front of the other, happens before faith. The idea is that I am given the ability by the pre-regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to believe, trust Christ, and be saved. The moment I do that Boom I'm declared righteous, I'm justified, as opposed to the Calvinist would say you have to be regenerated because you're dead in trespasses and sins in order to believe and receive salvation. Again, I don't mean to confuse you but a lot of people struggle over these issues, and the crux of the matter is does regeneration precede, or come before, faith? My answer to that is no it does not. It happens at the same time. The moment you trust Jesus Christ, that you have the ability to believe, that you are born again and you're saved.

Here's my fourth point which dovetails with what I just said. In verse 30 it says, "...whom he called, them he also justified." So, He foreknows us, He predestines us, He calls us, and He justifies us. We've studied justification earlier in the book of Romans 3, and we've learned that

we're justified by faith and not by works. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's justification. I do believe that happens the moment you trust Jesus, "...by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself." When it says, "that not of yourself," it's not talking about your faith is not of yourself but it's a gift of God; it's salvation that is not of yourself that is a gift of God, not your faith or your ability to believe. So, we're saved by grace through faith and salvation is not of ourselves. Salvation is a gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 it says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," that is, Christ, so you're justified.

Link number five, one more link in this chain and it's a good one. It goes into eternity future. In verse 30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Isn't that awesome! Paul said to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you..." will do what? He will finish it, He'll complete it. He's not like me, He finishes something He starts. Wouldn't it be a bummer if God started in you life, He saves you, and then He kind of says, "Oh, I'm tired of you. I'll put you on the shelf for a while." You know, you start a project and you get tired of it. You start a project and you don't finish it. You start a book and you don't finish. God starts to save you, He saves you and He works, and then He says, "Oh man. This person bores me. Set them on the back shelf." What God begins, God will complete.

The purpose of our salvation is to make us more like Jesus Christ. The progress of salvation is foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Glory is the last link in the golden chain of God's salvation purpose. In verses 17-18 he talks about if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified together with Him. It's God's remedy for corruption in the creation. Even the created world will be liberated from their groaning, verse 22, and the Christian from his groaning to glory, verse 23. Paul makes the most daring proclamation of faith found anywhere in the New Testament. He said, "God has glorified them," and I want you to notice that in your English translation it's in the past tense. Did you ever notice that? You would think that it would read "will glorify, might glorify, if they hang in there. If they go to Revival on Wednesday nights, they'll be glorified every week. If they come to the whole Romans series on Wednesday nights then God will grant you glorification. If you get a Christian haircut, God will glorify you. If you live a really good life, God will finish the job. He's kind of waiting to see what you do." I'm so glad that my future glorification doesn't depend on me! That would scare me to death. I'm so glad that what God begins, God finishes. What begins with grace ends in glory. You say, "Wow. There you are. You're a Calvinist." I'm just teaching the Bible. I don't know how anybody can read these verses and not see that what God begins God ends and not understand the security of that believer; that whom God places that love upon, whom God predetermines that one day they will be perfectly righteous and glorified like Jesus Christ, which is the third phase of our salvation, that God calls them in time, that God declares them righteous, and that one day they will stand in glory completely liberated from this body of sin and of death. We're in process right now, but we're not perfectly glorified or righteous yet. In God's economy, in God's eternity, that's how God actually views you right now. I don't really believe that the full understanding of this truth can really break in upon our minds and our

hearts. I just think we'd explode if we could understand this. That is, in God's economy, you as a child of God are already glorified. That's an awesome thought! Have you ever had it just kind of hit you? That, "I'm actually going to be in heaven all through eternity. I'm actually going to be in heaven! I'm going to spend eternity in heaven!" Are you looking forward to that? Are you longing for that? I am. Paul was writing that to comfort us and to encourage us. He's not really writing these things so that we'll sit around and debate Calvinism versus Arminianism. He's writing these things so our hearts rejoice.

Actually, as Gabe led us in worship tonight, if God be for us who can be against us. We're going to get that next Wednesday night. If God be for us, who can be against us? The five links in this golden unbreakable chain, and then he's going to go to five affirmations. If God be for us, who can be against us? God gave His own Son for us, will He not freely give us all things? In the Greek, this "glorified" is in what's called the aorist tense. We translate it in English as past tense, but it means it happens in the past, we experience in the present, and it has effect all the way into the future and on into eternity. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. I love what J. Vernon McGee said. He said, "He starts with 100 sheep, guess what He ends with? He doesn't lose one." Aren't you glad He's the Good Shepherd? If He starts with 100 sheep, He ends with 100 sheep. Can you imagine if we get to heaven and you say, "God, where's John Miller?" And He says, "Oh, I lost him. He slipped right through My hands, that slippery little dude. I tried my best but he just wiggled out. Too bad." Jesus never loses one of His own. He said, "The Father is greater than I, and the Father has put them in His hands." He said, "No one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." Isn't that amazing? There's no way—what He begins, He finishes. This should humble you. This should bless you, and this should foster in you a love, a devotion, and a commitment to follow God.

Everything I've talked about tonight has been geared toward the believer, but if you're here tonight and you've listened to a lot of this and you say, "I don't quite comprehend all this. I don't quite understand." I want you to know that tonight you can be saved. I want you to know tonight that you can leave here knowing that God has set His love upon you, that God has predetermined to make you like His Son, Jesus Christ. I want you to know that before you leave here tonight that God can forgive your sins. He can make you His child. He can give you the hope of eternal life, for the Bible says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." and listen to the next word, "...whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God loves you. God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you. If you will believe in Him, that means you trust Him. If you will trust in Jesus Christ tonight, not being religious, not being good, not being baptized, not trying to live a good life, not because of your religion, but if you come to Him born out of a sense of sin and God is speaking to you tonight, then He's calling you. If He's calling you, don't resist that call. Open your heart and receive Jesus Christ.

If there is anyone here tonight and you don't have assurance that if you were to die you'd go to heaven. Jesus died on the cross so that you could be forgiven. He took your sin. He died in your place. He was buried and rose again from the dead. All that is left for you to do is come to Him with a contrite heart and say, "God, I believe that Jesus died for me. I believe that He will

forgive me, and I trust Him right now." You say, "Jesus forgive my sins. Come into my heart and make me your child." I promise you, on the authority of God's Word, that Jesus will forgive you and He'll come into your heart. He'll make you His child, and you can leave here tonight knowing your sins are forgiven, you have the hope of heaven, and that you will be glorified one day in heaven. You know you're not ready to live until you're ready to die. Are you ready to die? Do you know Jesus Christ? Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.