

Romans 8:29-30

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[0 : 00] I think that's right. So, I'm going to read verses 28 to 30, but this morning we are particularly looking at verses 29 and 30 as we continue in our series through this chapter.

The Apostle Paul says this, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.

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.

And those whom He predestined, He also called, and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified.

Who is in control? Who am I, and where is my life going? Those are perhaps three of the most basic and profound human questions that we all ask ourselves at one time or another.

[1 : 15] But I think if we're honest with ourselves, many of us aren't quite sure how to answer those questions. And so, we live with an underlying sense of anxiety. Some of us live with anxiety about our past, maybe because of trauma or rejection that we've experienced, maybe because of failures that we fear will come back to haunt us, or we might even look back on our past successes, but we feel like they're never quite enough.

There's always something more that we need to be working on, striving towards in order to prove to the world that we're still worthy of recognition.

Some of us live with anxiety in the present. We live in a world that's rapidly changing. If you can remember, 10 years ago, no one owned a smartphone. Now we feel like we can't live a moment without them.

And we live today with the fear of missing out. We try to stay constantly connected, but ironically, we're becoming lonelier than ever. Since the 1980s, the percentage of American adults who say they're lonely has doubled from 20 to 40 percent.

And perhaps it's not a coincidence that the percentage of Americans diagnosed with anxiety disorders has steadily increased as well in the same time period.

[2 : 41] We have anxiety about the past, about the present, and even as we look toward the future, whether it's anxiety about our career, about our health, about our children, about aging parents and relatives, about what kind of legacy we'll leave behind, about death, and what comes after.

Is there anything we can say with confidence about the future? You know, in this morning's passage, the Apostle Paul sounds a ringing note of assurance in the midst of our anxieties.

Paul acknowledges in this chapter that we face afflictions, present sufferings, that we have weaknesses internally and emotionally, physically, spiritually, that we live in the midst of a world that groans under bondage to corruption and decay.

But Paul says there's one thing of which we can be confident, that God is steadily carrying out His eternal purpose in the lives of everyone who loves Him.

Last week, we looked at verse 28, a wonderful verse where Paul says that all things work together for good, under God's providence for the good of those who love Him.

[3 : 55] And the second half of that verse reminds us that everyone who loves God has also been called according to God's purpose. In verses 29 and 30, open a window, give us a glimpse behind the curtain into God's unchanging purpose from eternity past through the present age and to eternity future.

There are five verbs in verses 29 and 30 that form an unbroken chain. Two of them refer to God's purpose from eternity past, foreknown and predestined.

Two of them refer to God's purpose as it's carried out in the present age, called and justified, and one of them refers to God's purpose that stretches into eternity future, glorified.

Now, before we look at each of these verbs in turn, I want you to notice that the subject of all five verbs is the same, God. And the object of all five verbs is also the same, those.

It doesn't say that God foreknew one group of people and then decided to predestine a different group of people and then called half of those and justified a few of those and glorified somebody else.

[5 : 07] No. It says, those whom God foreknew, He also predestined and called and justified and glorified. God's purpose is carried out consistently, steadily, unswervingly from eternity past through the present age into eternity future.

And in the end, we'll see that that's why we can find rest from our anxieties. That's why we can be assured, we can be confident in God's unchanging love.

That's why we can persevere to the end with steadfastness, because God is steadfast in carrying out His purpose. One commentator put it this way.

He wrote, in order to show the branches, that's us, that they are indeed to blossom and bear fruit, Paul demonstrates in these verses, that the tree is securely planted and well-rooted.

So, that's what we're going to consider this morning, the tree on which we depend, of God's steady and unchanging purpose from eternity past through the present age and into eternity to come.

[6 : 16] Now, the last two weeks, we focused on God's work in the present age, the Holy Spirit helping us in our weakness through prayer, and God working all the things that we experience in our life together for our good.

The two weeks before that, we looked at the future, about the hope that we have for the redemption of our bodies and the renewal of all creation. So, I'm going to spend the bulk of our time today on the first point, God's purpose from eternity past, and then more briefly address how that carries out in the present age.

And the future, simply because we've addressed those aspects in some other sermons recently. But they're all connected from God's purpose from eternity past to eternity future.

So, first, first point, God's purpose from eternity past. Those He foreknew, He also predestined. Oh boy, here we go. Right? These two words, foreknowledge and predestination, have been the subject of much controversy and some confusion in the history of the church.

Now, to give you a bit of a sense of my background, I was brought up in a church that for the most part ignored or ridiculed the idea of predestination. Not that ugly idea.

[7 : 32] Then I came to college and started attending another church that strongly affirmed predestination, and one of the pastors even basically told me that if I couldn't agree with their view on predestination, I shouldn't become a member of their church.

So, for about nine months during my sophomore year of college, I was inwardly obsessed with predestination. I couldn't figure out what to make of it. It kept me up at night, turning the concepts over and over in my mind with no satisfying resolution.

It bothered me even at church. I found it hard to concentrate in worship and during sermons because my mind would go there and the wheels would start spinning and never really gain traction. But I told hardly anyone because I thought surely no one else can relate to such an esoteric struggle.

Now, as a side note, if you are wrestling with some kind of doubt or question or temptation or besetting sin, and if you think that no other Christian can ever relate to what you're going through, that is always a lie from the devil.

Don't believe it. Don't isolate yourself from the body of believers and fight your battles all alone. God's given us each other, and He sustains us by His grace through our fellowship with one another, imperfect as we are.

[8 : 52] Now, one of the things that was actually helpful, one of the ways that God did work through the body of Christ in my life at that time, was a few of us had started going to the homeless shelter and talking with people there about Jesus.

You might think, what in the world does that have to do with predestination? Well, it didn't help me figure out predestination, but it got me out of my own head. And that's a blessing to any Yale undergraduate. Amen?

Every once in a while at least. Talking with the people in the homeless shelter reminded me of the gospel that I'd always known, that Jesus Christ died for sinners, and that His blood was sufficient to save and powerful to transform anyone who would come to Him in faith.

So, let me say this. The doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination are not the forefront of the gospel message. Okay? They're not the key above all else to understanding the message of the Bible.

There's no book of the Bible whose main theme above everything else is God's foreknowledge and predestination. In the drama of Scripture, they're more like backstage realities, things that are well known to the director but aren't in clear and full view of the audience.

[10 : 07] And yet, we occasionally get a glimpse into them in Scriptures like these. And this Scripture, like every other one, is given for our good. So, let's dig in.

Verse 29. Foreknowledge. Sometimes this word can mean simply knowing about something ahead of time. And so, some people have said God's foreknowledge refers to God knowing in advance who will choose to believe in and obey Him of their own accord.

So, in other words, the verse would mean those whose faith and obedience God knew about beforehand, those ones He predestined to glory.

So, in that view, God's predestination depends completely on our free choice. It's all up to us. But there are problems with that view.

For one thing, it's just not what the verse says. The verse doesn't say those whose faith God foreknew or those whose obedience God foreknew.

[11 : 14] It says those whom God foreknew. God foreknew people, not choices or actions. When this verse says God foreknew us, it doesn't just mean God knew something about us.

It means that long before we were born, He knew us in an intimate and personal way. He committed Himself to us and set us apart for Himself. And this is how the word is used in many other places in Scripture.

Romans 11 verse 2 says, God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. In the Old Testament, God said to the prophet Jeremiah, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

It doesn't just mean I knew about you. It doesn't just mean I knew you would exist one day. It means I've chosen you and called you. I set you apart to be a prophet to the nations.

Jesus Himself actually uses the same language of being known by God in a rather scary warning at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says that some people who call Him Lord but never obey Him will one day hear Him say to them, I never knew you.

[12 : 21] Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. He's saying, I never knew you. In other words, I never enjoyed a genuine, personal, intimate relationship with you and you with me.

In many places in the Bible, to know someone means to be intimately related to them, to know them inside and out. The Hebrew word to know is sometimes used to describe the exclusive intimacy shared by a husband and wife who have promised themselves to each other in love.

So, when it says God foreknew His people from eternity past, it's as if a parent is talking to their child and saying, son or daughter, long before you were conscious, long before you were born into the world or adopted into our family, even before you were conceived in the womb, you were wanted.

We wanted you. We sought you out. You were foreknown and foreloved. When you became part of our family, we gave you our name, our family name.

Not as a crown for your achievements, not as a response to your performance, not for a probationary period of time to see how you turn out, but to say that you belong because you were foreknown and foreloved.

[13 : 47] That's what God says to every one of us. I knew you before the beginning of time, before you were aware of me, before you, certainly before you chose me. You were foreknown, pre-loved, from eternity past.

And that's what God says to every one of His children who's been adopted into His family through faith in His Son. Paul goes on to say, those whom God foreknew, He also predestined.

Now, for some of us, when we hear the word predestined, we think of the idea of fate. But these are not the same thing. Fatalism means living in a world where your destiny is determined by the stars or by something else that's impersonal and ultimately random.

Biblical faith is living in a universe that is ruled by an ever-present and living and purposeful and personal God. Fatalism says, whatever will be, will be.

So, it doesn't really matter what I do. And in the end, I'm not really responsible for what happens. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible affirms both God's complete sovereignty and human responsibility.

[15 : 16] It's not an either-or, it's both-and. So, let me give you a few examples. Look in this chapter, look at verse 23. In this verse, in the middle of the verse, it says, we ourselves, we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.

But then look down at verse 26. The end of verse 26, it says, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Now, when you put these two verses together, what is it saying? It's saying, the groanings that come from the very depth of our own heart are simultaneously the groans produced by the Holy Spirit of God who dwells within us.

Or you can look ahead to Romans 9 and 10. Now, Romans chapter 9 emphasizes God's sovereignty. If you look at Romans 9, verse 18, it's about as strong a statement as you can get.

God has mercy on whomever He wills, and He hardens whomever He wills. But then if you go on to chapter 10, chapter 10 emphasizes human responsibility.

[16 : 26] If you look at chapter 10, verse 13, it says, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The end of the chapter, verse 21, He says, God's speaking to His people, saying, all day long, I've held out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.

God's sovereignty over everything and human responsibility. They're two hands, and they're not chopped off from each other.

Two hands part of the same body. Or consider another example, 2 Corinthians 8, 16 and 17. Paul says this. He says, Thanks be to God who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you.

And then he goes on and says, For He not only accepted our appeal, but being Himself very earnest, He is going to you of His own accord. So, Paul says, in one verse, God put it into the heart of Titus to do what He's doing.

And in the second verse, he says, Titus is going to you of His own accord. And that's not a contradiction. See, the Bible puts both of these things together. N.T. Wright puts it this way, Christian faith is wholeheartedly and responsibly answering the call of a sovereign God with love, gratitude, and obedience that comes from the depth of our own being and is simultaneously experienced as a response to a sovereignty, a compulsion even.

[17 : 52] Now, some of you might say, but I just don't see how both of these things can be true at the same time. It just doesn't... I can't put it together in my head. It doesn't make sense. But consider this.

In the natural world, in the physical universe, we see paradoxes that we cannot fully resolve. Yet, they are undeniably real.

For example, physicists tell us that light is both a wave and a particle. Now, it's very difficult, right? It's very difficult to explain, and I think even the PhD students in physics can affirm this, it's very difficult to explain how both of those things are true at the same time.

But it's very well established that they are both true. If you study quantum mechanics, it just makes your head spin. It's not what anyone would have come up with on their own.

But it's reality, strange as it may seem. And if the physical universe that scientists can study and examine operates in ways that are counterintuitive and hard, if not impossible, for our human minds to fully grasp, how much more mysterious and unfathomable and glorious are the ways of an infinite God as God interacts with His creation.

[19 : 13] You know, if you think about nearly every major Christian doctrine, it contains some mystery. The Trinity, one God in three persons.

Jesus Christ, completely God, and yet He became completely human at the same time. And the interplay between God's complete sovereignty and our human responsibility.

And when we probe the depths of these biblical teachings, it's meant to lead us to awe-filled worship. That's where Paul goes at the end of Romans 11 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?

For from Him and to Him and through Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen. You know, every time the Bible talks about God's predestination, His sovereign choice of us before the foundation of the world is for one of three purposes.

[20 : 33] First, it's to promote gratitude and praise to God. So, Ephesians 1 says, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we might be to the praise of His glory, that we might praise Him for His amazing grace, that He has lavished upon us from eternity past.

Second, it's to promote humility. That's one of the main emphases of Romans 9. Romans 9.20 says, Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will the clay say to the potter, why have you made me like this?

It humbles us. The third purpose is to give assurance to suffering believers, and that's actually the main purpose of this text in the context of the middle of Romans 8.

The whole section is talking about our present suffering and our future glory, and so verses 29 and 30 are meant to reassure us. They're meant to reassure us in the midst of our suffering and looking to Christ that He's on our side and He's for us and we can trust Him.

And He's been there all along. To know that we are predestined by God means to know that our lives have a destination. Isn't that what's in that word, predestination?

[21 : 54] It means we have a destination that we're going to. The Greek word is *prohorizo*. It's where we get the word horizon. It's a word that's meant to focus our attention on the goal, the destination that God has set out for us in the second half of verse 29 tells us what that is, to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Pastor Nick talked last week that this is the good that verse 28 is talking about when it says, all things work together for good. What's that good?

It's that we become more and more like Jesus Himself. He is the pattern, the imprint, the glory, everything the human race was originally intended to be.

And we who believe in Him and belong to Him are being shaped, polished, melted down, smoothed out, sculpted, framed, cast into that master design.

This has been God's plan and purpose from eternity past. Now, I want you to think for a moment about the process of creating a work of art.

[23 : 04] Because it says that that's what God is doing in conforming us to the image of His Son. It's the image of creating a work of beauty. Creating a work of art is messy.

Have you ever walked into an art studio with a bunch of works in progress that looks neat and tidy? No! But the artist has a purpose in mind, right?

Despite the apparent madness and chaos. And God is not above working through apparent madness and chaos to produce His masterpieces.

Second, creating a work of art is intense. Think about glass blowing or wood turning or sculpture making or anything where you have to use a blowtorch on metal.

Not for the faint of heart. Sometimes God brings us through fiery trials that feel intense through painful experiences not to destroy us but to refine us and to make us into something unimaginably beautiful that we would otherwise never become.

[24 : 21] Third, it's time-consuming. Think about a painting on a large canvas. Last summer before last, my family went to a museum in Ohio that contained a circular mural 265 feet long by 10 feet high chronicling the history of the Anabaptist movement.

It was entirely the work of one man from Germany. It took him 14 years to do the background research, to plan out the sequence, and finally to paint the mural.

And he did it all by himself the whole way. Now think about that. It's messy, it's intense, and it's time-consuming.

Brothers and sisters, here's the point. The life and work that God has set before you may be all those things. It might be messy. Your life might feel chaotic and just disordered right now.

It might feel intense and painful. It might be just long and drawn out. A time-consuming journey. But here's what this verse is saying.

[25 : 32] It's saying, long ago, God made a plan. And long ago, God envisioned the glorious destination that He is leading you towards every day by His Spirit.

His purpose from eternity past is that you might come to be one of His masterpieces, reflecting the beautiful image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

That you might be one of Christ's brothers or sisters forever. That He might be the firstborn among many. Another way you can think about this is God's purpose from eternity past was to have a big family.

Now, God always had a perfect family. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They were one happy family from all eternity, full of love and glory and power and wisdom and mutual understanding and mutually indwelling, utterly complete and unbroken, not lacking anything.

But God didn't just want a perfect family, He wanted a big one. He intentionally chose to open His home to a vast multitude of children. Not temporarily, but forever.

[26 : 43] forever. And oh, that was a costly choice. Because God the Father, to make us His children, had to send His one and only Son into this world, to rescue us from sin and death and the devil that we had gotten ourselves into.

And the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, suffered and bled and died to make us His brothers and sisters. brothers. Talk about a brother who will sacrifice for you, who would die for you.

You have one. And now God the Father has sent His very own Holy Spirit into each of our hearts to assure us that God is really our Father, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, that despite all the rejection we might have experienced and all the trauma that's in our past and all the craziness we might have gone through, that we can trust this God.

Forever and ever. God's the ultimate adoptive parent. And He has a glorious destination for every one of His children who've been adopted through Christ.

Forever. That's God's purpose from eternity past. But second, we see that God's purpose continues to be carried out in the present age.

[28 : 07] Those He predestined, He also called, and those He called, He also justified. Second Timothy 1.9 says a similar thing, God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

Again, it began before the ages, and it's now carried out in the present age. What does it mean to be called? Again, Pastor Nick talked about this last week when Paul talks about being called according to God's eternal purpose.

He's not just talking about being invited externally, He's talking about being awakened internally to the truth through the conviction of the Holy Spirit brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you look at Romans 4, verse 17, it says, God gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Isn't that amazing?

when God calls us, we become a new creation in Christ. He breathed life into us where previously we were spiritually dead and unresponsive to God.

[29 : 15] Some of you have experienced this very distinctly. You can point to a time in your own life. You can look back and remember a time when you wanted nothing to do with God. You hated God.

You were indifferent toward Him. You just wanted to be your own God. Or you were trying to use God for your own purposes. Rather than let Him use you for His. And then one day God through His Word called you to Himself.

Maybe it was through a sermon that you heard, maybe a scripture you were reading that jumped off the page to you, maybe a Christian friend or even a stranger who shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with you, and whatever the means, God awakened you that day, and you realized your spiritual need, and you saw the beauty and sufficiency of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for your sins, covering them with His blood, rising from the dead victorious, and He poured the love of God into your heart through the Holy Spirit, and now you don't just believe that God is out there somewhere, you love Him because He first loved you.

You've been called. Now, not every one of us can pinpoint a moment when that happened. Some of us can't remember a time when we didn't believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

God called us to Himself before we even knew what He was doing. And that's a wonderful testimony too. Sometimes we know it's happened, but we can't quite identify when, right?

[30 : 42] Some days the sun rises with brilliance and glory, and other days it's behind all the clouds. But either way, a new day has dawned. Paul says in Romans 1, verse 6 and 7, you are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Loved by God and called to be saints. That word means God's holy people. You're called to belong to Jesus and to be His holy people in the world. That's what it means to be called by God.

And Paul goes on, those he called, he also justified. To be justified by God means to be in right standing with God, to be forgiven of our sins, that God will never hold them against us anymore.

That we're declared righteous in His sight. This is the main theme of Romans 3 and 4. If you read those chapters, it talks all about being justified by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And chapter 5 says the result of being justified by faith in Christ is we have peace with God. That we stand in God's grace and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory.

[31 : 53] Have you experienced those things? the peace with God knowing that your sins have been forgiven and paid for. The hope of God's glory, God's grace to sustain you and help you stand in the present day.

This is how God carries out His eternal purpose. By calling people to belong to Jesus and justifying them through their belief in Jesus. Have you experienced this?

Have you been called and justified? Have you come to believe in and belong to Jesus Christ? Maybe for some of you, you haven't. You say, I don't yet really believe in Jesus.

Well, let me ask you, why not? What is there that is holding you back from fully entrusting yourself to Him? Maybe you're just starting to learn what Christianity is all about.

That's great. Start by reading through one of the New Testament Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Maybe talk about it with a friend. Keep coming to church.

[33 : 04] We want to help you understand what Christianity is all about. It's ultimately about who Jesus is and what God has done through Him for us. Maybe you have questions or objections or concerns that you need to work through.

If you haven't already read Tim Keller's book, *The Reason for God*, I highly recommend it. Now, he has another one that's very thought-provoking called *Making Sense of God*.

Those are excellent resources if you want to read something that goes into some depth. But maybe you're mostly... Maybe you've worked through some questions.

Maybe you've been coming for some time, and if you're honest with yourself, you're mostly persuaded that Jesus probably was who He said He was. That, yeah, He probably really was the Son of God, but there's something else that holds you back from committing to Him.

What is that? Is it fear of being ridiculed by others or disapproved of by others? Is it pride? I mean, every Christian has to let go of the air of being totally self-sufficient.

[34 : 20] Because isn't that at the heart of what it means to be a Christian is to admit that you're not? Is it reluctance to embrace the cost of following Jesus? There's always a cost. It may look different for each of us.

Let me challenge you to ask, what is holding me back from fully trusting Jesus? And to address whatever that is. You see, if you have come to believe in Jesus and belong to Jesus, that is not an accident.

You've entered into a much bigger story than you can imagine. God's own story that stretches from eternity past to eternity future. God's purpose and plan for you and for every believer in Jesus began in eternity past.

His purpose will continue into eternity future beyond the farthest horizon that your eye can now glimpse or your mind imagine. To use a very imperfect analogy of what this means to be called and justified and brought into God's eternal purpose, imagine that you get a check in the mail for \$10,000 along with a note that you're receiving this check because you've been included in a distant relative's will.

And your immediate reaction is, wow, how generous. I can pay off some debts, I can stash some in savings, I can buy a couple of things that our family needs, and then the next month another check arrives for the same amount from the same source.

[35 : 53] And the next month, and another, and another, and then you learn that this relative has set up a college fund that will provide for all your kids' education, and they've left you a vacation home in the Adirondacks.

You thought the first check was pretty good. An undeserved favor from a generous and thoughtful relative who thought of you in advance. But now you see that it was only one small part of a much larger inheritance.

Only one small link in a chain of kindness. And that's what Paul's saying is true, spiritually speaking, of every believer in Jesus.

When you first come to Jesus, there's joy, and you experience some of His blessings. And then Paul's saying, but there's even a larger, longer chain of God's kindness and His thoughtfulness from eternity past to eternity future that you've come into.

Do you see that? Have you begun to glimpse God's steady and eternal and loving purpose for you? It goes from eternity past through the present age, and finally we see it goes into eternity future.

[37 : 10] Those He justified, He also glorified. Now the puzzling thing about this word glorified is that Paul's talking about something that hasn't happened yet.

And that's very clear from the rest of verse 18, for example. Paul says, I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. He's talking about the future glory when Jesus comes again and we'll be glorified with Him.

But he uses the same verb tense he's used for every other action in this chain of events. In Greek, it's called the aoris tense.

It's used to speak about a completed action. Now what's the point? Paul's not using... it's not a grammar mistake. The point is God's promises for the future are as real and as reliable as if they had already taken place in history.

You can be as certain of them as you can of things that have already happened. God is not... because God is not limited by time just as He's not limited by space.

[38 : 23] And so Paul can speak of our future glorification as a completed work even though we have not yet experienced it. God's purposes are eternal, steady, and sure.

And even if we can't yet see how they're all going to work out, God can guarantee it. One commentator described this passage as a golden chain of interconnected divine actions leading to a climax, our glorification, a series of divine initiatives snowballing toward fullness, a steady drumbeat of God's unshakable purpose.

What God undertakes will ultimately come to pass. God will complete the work He has begun. God will complete that's our confidence. That's our assurance in the midst of everything within us and everything around us that makes us anxious and afraid and complacent and discontent.

Paul says, look to God's eternal purpose. Now, these verses are not saying that our faith or our obedience are irrelevant or unnecessary.

Paul speaks a lot about faith in Romans 1-4 and a lot about obedience, putting sin to death, walking in the Spirit in chapters 5-8. But Paul wants to remind us here that in the end, our salvation and the destiny of all creation is not ultimately in our hands.

[39 : 50] It's not ultimately dependent on us. God is God and His sovereign purpose won't be thwarted. Salvation comes from the Lord. You see, if our salvation ultimately depends on how strong or how pure or how enduring our faith is, then we will either vastly overestimate our capabilities and fall into pride, or we will despair of ever reaching the goal that God has set out for us.

To find assurance, we need to rest in God's eternal and steady purpose in His unfailing love and faithfulness. When we look down below us and see that the tree to which we are connected through Christ is steadily planted and well-rooted, then we can continue bearing fruit and not constantly be anxiously looking around, worrying that the tree is going to fall over in the next storm.

You see, it's with this assurance we can face all the sources of our anxiety. We can face our past and know that our past does not define us. We can rest secure because we have a heavenly Father who has foreknown and foreloved us from before time began.

We can face our present weakness, our present sufferings, and know that through them God's refining us, even when it's messy, even when it's intense, and even when it's a long journey because He's leading us toward the destination that He has set out for us in Christ.

And we can face the uncertainties of the future knowing that God's plans and purposes for the future are as certain as if they had already happened. Brothers and sisters, God's eternal purpose in Jesus Christ is steady and strong.

[41 : 53] Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You for this window into Your purposes from eternity past through the present age into eternity future.

Father, we pray, Lord, that as we prepare to come to the communion table that we would cast our anxieties on You, that we would know that You care for us, that we would know that You are faithful to Your promises, that we would be able to rest assured in Your good purpose for us.

Strengthen us that we may love You with all of our hearts, that as we depend on You, that our lives might bear fruit.

Lord Jesus, You said to Your disciples, You did not choose me, but I have chosen You and appointed You to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Lord, help us to bear fruit for Your kingdom with our lives.

trusting in Your mercy and grace. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.