

**SAFE AND SECURE
FOUNDATIONS OF SECURITY**

Romans 8:28-30

We will read these verses then we'll pray. This is God's word. He says:

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.

Let's pray. What an amazing set of verses, God. These few sentences teach us so much about you, about us. Thank you for your word. God, I pray that right now it would infiltrate our hearts, that it would change us. I pray that your words, not mine, would breathe life into our very souls and change us from the inside out, that we might leave this place different from when we came in. And God, in a life where we are searching and grasping for ways to be safe, to be secure, to find joy, we pray that you would show us that our only hope is in you, and that our true foundation of security is so much bigger, so much more amazing than we can imagine. So God, help us now as we study your word. We love you and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, we are continuing on in this series. Even in my prayer I was referencing what we are going to be talking about today. We are praying and hoping that God's word would change us, because this idea of security and safety is something that we all deal with. We all are engaged in the process of trying to be safe, trying to find security. We work hard to seek out ways to stay protected, to stay safe. I thought maybe it would be a helpful tool for us, if you're someone who takes notes, to jot down this question. You might have a device to take notes on. If you don't want to do any of that, just think about this question, or the answer to the question I am about to ask you. **What do you most look to for security?**

I want you to be honest. I want you to think about where your mind goes first when I say, "Okay, you find security in _____." There is this place that you tend to run to for security. I want you to write that down. I want you to think about it. I really want you to be honest, because many of us know the right and good things to say. "My only hope is in the Lord and I only run to him." And

you're lying. It's not true. We all have places that we want to go to help us feel safe, to help us feel secure.

Did you get it? Did you write it down? Are you thinking about it? Because this is important! We all go somewhere for security and safety. Many of us, maybe not in here but in the world and in general -- sometimes we have strange superstitions that help us stay secure, help us stay safe. Some people will go to great measures to protect themselves from the evil forces that surround us.

Have you ever heard of the evil eye? This is legit. People really fear the evil eye. There are hand symbols that you can do to put the curse on other people. This is very popular in some cultures. Some people will actually take bags of salt and dump it all over the floor around a doorway because that is the way to stop the evil eye from getting into your place of business or your house. There are bracelets you can wear – red bracelets. You can do counter symbols, like a rock/paper/scissors kind of thing to help ward off the evil spirits. Some people will tie a red ribbon on a baby's crib or a baby's bed if they want to protect their child. I have even heard it goes so far as to sew a red ribbon into a child's underwear. Why do you do that? Well, because of the evil eye. It's coming, and this will help you ward off the evil eye.

I know that for some of you this hits very close to home. Others are like, "This sounds crazy." But come on, we do this. We engage in all kinds of weird things to somehow keep our lives in a place of safety, because we are looking for security. It doesn't have to be superstitions. We just tend to look in the wrong places. We might look to the government. We might look to money, to finances. We might look to our jobs, what we do for a living. Health, beauty, friendship, popularity – whatever it is -- there are things that we will just run toward to bring security. The problem is that none of it works. They all fail. All of those things will fail us at one point or another. And, we have to ask ourselves why. Why do these things not deliver on what they promise?

It's because they make for very poor gods. They promise great things. They promise us joy, safety, security, but they cannot deliver. I wrap joy up into this, because I do think that joy is tightly connected to how we view security. We live our lives to create safety and security because we think that that is going to create happiness and joy in our lives. But these wrong places can't deliver. **They promise to meet a need at our deepest level, but the problem is that only God can meet that need.** Only God can meet those needs.

I think back to an interview in 2005. Last week there was a great football game on, and the Lord was faithful to the Dolphins' fans to allow the Philadelphia Eagles to win over the mighty New England Patriots. As I was thinking through this passage, it reminded me of an interview with Tom Brady over 10 years ago. He is the quarterback of the New England Patriots. Best ever, okay? I'll just say that. Greatest ever. The team is unbelievable. Best ever. All of it. But back in 2005, he had already won three Super Bowls. He was a young man, really at the pinnacle of his career. Eventually, they went on to win two more and it didn't stop there.

But this is fascinating. This is what he said in an interview; I believe it was 60 minutes. He said, "There are times when I'm not the person I want to be. Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what it is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me – I think, 'God, there's got to be more than this.' I mean, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean, I've done it. I'm 27 and what else is there for me?" The interviewer asked him a follow-up question. He said, "Well, what's the answer?" And Brady said, "I wish I knew."

He is not an anomaly, right? This is someone who has reached the pinnacle of his career in so many ways. Maybe his views have changed since then, but I think it is a picture for us. We all can look at him and say, "Yeah, I can identify, because I thought if I did this, or if I got to this point in my life, then things would be different. I would be happier. I would feel that sense of security, that sense of significance. I would find the joy that I was looking for. But, inevitably when we get to that point, the scale just continues on and says, 'No, I just need to go a little further.'"

Our foundation for joy (and this is the point for today) our foundation for significance, for safety, for security, has to be built on stronger things. It has to. So this passage helps us. If I could just make this simple statement: **Our security must be rooted in the Lord.** I know that that is a simple statement, and probably a cliché statement, but I can't think of a simpler way to say it. We will talk and expand on that, but if we don't start here, if the foundations of our security do not begin here, then we are going to live a life continually searching for the magic bullet that will bring the safety that we are looking for, the security.

I'm going to keep it very simple. There are three verses here: 28, 29, and 30, and there are three points.

I. Our security is found in God's purpose,

II. Our security is found in God's power.

III. Our security is found in God's promise.

You will see as I go through that these are very tightly connected. One does not come without the other. Really, there is a lot of overlap within them, but I think it does help us to split out these verses to give us a picture of the Lord in a unique way.

I. Our security is found in God's purpose.

Let's jump in with verse 28. Brian spoke on this verse last week. We spent the whole morning last week talking about verse 28. "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." I don't want to spend the whole time on this verse since we did look at it last week, but I feel like I cannot move on to 29 and 30 without touching on this again, because they are so tightly connected.

The basic point here is that for those who love God, he is working all things out for good. I don't think we could say this enough or preach this enough, because we are just prone to drift away from this truth. **God has a purpose for everything that happens to you. He uses all of it for his purpose, and your good -- his purpose and your good.**

You see, purpose without that good part could be scary, but when we talk about purpose *and* that he is a good God and he is working it out for your good -- that is extremely helpful. We have to understand that this is a big deal. This is a huge truth, because this shows us that our security is not tied to a safe and comfortable life. Our security in life is not tied to the circumstances that surround our lives. That's hard. That is hard for us to grasp, because we would prefer it be that way. I would prefer to craft my life in such a way that I'd be able to control the security checkpoints that allow whatever is out there to get to me and to my family, but that's not what God promises us. That's not how he does things. **"Safe and comfortable" is not the Christian life. Uncomfortable things will come.**

If I asked for a show of hands right now and said, "Who is uncomfortable in their life?" I would imagine many hands would go up. You can define that word "uncomfortable" however you would like, but we know that difficulties will come. This text shows us that Christians are not immune to bad things happening. If we drop down a little bit from our verses today and continue reading down

to verse 35 in chapter 8, look at what he says. This is the Apostle Paul writing. He says, “Who is going to separate us from the love of Christ?” Then he gives us the list. “Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” I don’t want any of those words in my life. I don’t want tribulation. I don’t want any of those things to happen in my life. Paul is saying, “Look, these things may come in life; the question is: Are they going to unravel your life?” The question for us is: What do we do when those things come? How do we process it when those things come to us?

Our sense of security has to be tied to something stronger, something immovable, because if our security is tied up in the wrong things... Let’s say it’s tied up in money. Well, what’s the problem? The problem is that money comes and money goes. Money is fleeting. Just this week the stock market was all over the place. If your security is tied up in the stock market, in the financial picture of your life, then where the money goes you go. Where the money goes your heart goes, and that is not the key to a healthy life.

If your security is tied up in the government, you’re in trouble. We could fill in the blank there with so many different things. Whatever you might have written down or thought of that you are tempted to go to for security, for safety – if it is not in what we are talking about today, if it is something else, then you clearly can see how... Even the best things in life can’t fulfill that role. If you are married and if your sense of security is all wrapped up in your spouse, as good as that spouse may be, he or she *cannot* fulfill that role the way that you need it to be fulfilled.

If I’m tied up with these things, I go where they go. **But what God tells us is that there is a place to find security that is beyond the ups and downs of life. It’s found in something unchangeable, and that unchangeable thing is his purpose -- his perfect, powerful, sovereign, purpose. He works all things out for good. The ups and downs of life -- he has a purpose in those things, and not just any purpose but a good purpose.**

You are like, “Adam, you said that already.” I have to say it again and again, because we will forget. We think God is something different than he is. He is good and he is working good things through your life. I know the temptation is to say, “But Adam, listen, there are horrible things that are happening right now, or that have happened, and I don’t understand how God is going to use this particular tragedy in my life to bring about anything good. There is *nothing* good about what is

happening. I don't understand. Why is God doing this? How is he going to do this? How is he going to turn it around?"

I wish we could just tell you, as your pastors, because we love you so much: "Listen, this is why it's happening. And this is how God is going to do it." But I don't know. This is why the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 12 to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. There are times when we just cannot give answers for what is going on in life. But I do know this, and I want this to be something that's not just, "Oh, yeah, yeah, that's nice," but to really grab our hearts. **God the Father allowed the most terrible and unjust thing to happen to his Son, his perfect, sinless, beloved Son, Jesus Christ. He allowed him to be crucified and beaten and mocked and killed because there was a bigger purpose.** There was something that he wanted to do through that, and that something is why we sit here today, because we have found life in the death of Jesus Christ. He didn't have to do it that way. He didn't have to do that, but that was in his plan, what he deemed was the way for us to come to life in him.

If he allowed that, should we be surprised that he allows difficulty in our lives? It's not because he doesn't love us. That can't be it, because he loved his Son. We are told over and over again how much he loves us. It's because there is a bigger purpose involved. He is working our tragedies into something good.

The temptation is for me to stand up here and tell stories of how God has taken something bad and turned it into something good. We could probably all look and think about stories in life that have happened that way. We could say, "Man, I did this. I didn't understand it at first, but then God turned it around." I have those stories, but I don't want to do that. I don't think that's the most helpful thing for us. They are encouraging. But we are also tempted at times to try to figure out: "What's the formula, then, for how God is going to do this for me?" Or, "What's the timetable? How long do I have to wait? I'll give God a week to turn this around into something good." And we can't do that.

It is a totality of life that is in view from birth to death. Things are happening, purposes are being unfolded, and yes, bad things may come, but he is working all of that out for good. We may not ever see the full good that is coming from it, but it is what brings comfort to our souls -- that he is at work for good purposes. It is a process. It's his timing. It's his plan. It's his purpose. I know that it is hard to wait and it is hard to go through.

Let me say this before we move on. It is better that we are tethered to God's purposes, his plan, and his way of doing it than our own, than to random chance. As we look further in this passage, we see that God is big. He is bigger than all of it, and we want to rest in the fact that his purposes are good and that he is working it out.

Listen, this doesn't mean that we just throw this scripture out at people who are going through tragedy, who are going through difficulty. When you are dealing with a death in the family or with a broken relationship and you just go up and pat them on the back like, "Hey man, God works all things for good," that may not be the best and most helpful way to be with someone in those times. That's why we call this the foundations of security. This is what undergirds everything that we do.

Yeah, when you are going through it you feel it. You are like, "Man, this hurts. I'm crying. I'm going through it, but there is something in me. There is a strength inside because I have read this. I have trusted that God is going to use this for his good and I trust him. I trust him with it." Find your security in God's purposes.

Look what comes next in verse 29. We've been talking about security in his purpose, but now security in his power.

II. Our security is found in God's power.

You see, these two need to go together. It says, "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." We start to see this unfold. The bigness of God unfolds. It's Paul kind of pulling back the curtain and saying, "Listen, this is huge. He is big. It's one thing to say that God has a purpose and to trust him because of that, but how do we know that he can do it? How do we know that he can deliver? Purpose is tightly connected to power. He not only says there is purpose in everything we go through, but he is also powerful enough to bring about the purpose that he has. Purpose without power will only go so far.

My youngest son is sitting here in the front row. He is five. He does not lack confidence, so he will just walk up to me sometimes, look me in the eye and say, "Hey Dad, I'm just going to beat you up." You know, I have to accept the challenge, of course. He's got a lot of purpose in that statement. He, in many ways I think, truly believes in whatever way that is going to look like, whatever the end result

is for him beating me up. He thinks, “This is my purpose. I will accomplish this.” He just doesn’t have the power to back it up at all, and I make sure he understands that. Purpose without power will only get you so far, my son.

I think that’s just a small picture. Look, there are plenty of institutions out there, plenty of people, plenty of things that have lots of intentions. They have a will to do something, but if there is nothing that supports it, that is undergirding what you are trying to do, if there is no power behind it, it will not come to pass in the way that you think. Paul works hard to show us that God doesn’t have that problem. **When God says that he is working all things for your good, he is working all things for your good, and he’s got the goods to deliver on that promise. This is a major source of our security.**

God is powerful. He is all-powerful. Think of the most amazing, powerful thing that you can and you haven’t even scratched the surface about how much more powerful God is than that. The fancy word for it is “omnipotent.” Omni-potent, omnipotent. That’s the big word that just means he is all-powerful. We also use the word “sovereign” to describe it. He is a sovereign God. God is completely other than. He is completely independent. He does not need anything else. He does not answer to a higher power. He is the final authority and say in all things. What it means is that God is able to accomplish everything that he sets out to do. Nothing gets in the way of God.

This is seen all throughout scripture. I would just pull out one passage that is one of my favorites. It’s from Isaiah 46. I love this. It says:

*...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, ‘My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,’*

Man, when God is moving in a direction, he continues from start to finish, and he will finish. God’s purposes will be accomplished. There is none like him. He says it there. “I am God and there is no other. There is none like me.” Our problem is that we often want God to be like something that we can relate to that is just like us. When he has made us in his image, we are continually trying to make

God into our own image and put him in a nice, neat box that says, “This is how God will operate. If he really loves me, this is what he would do.” And when he doesn’t do that very thing, we start to question. We say, “Well, maybe he’s not real, or he doesn’t love me, or this, or that.” We have to pull out of that type of thinking.

Look, it’s not wrong to question what God is doing. I don’t want us to ever think that. The psalmists question at times. They say, “God, I don’t understand what you are doing. This doesn’t make sense to me. How long will you do this? Or, how long will you do that?” What needs to happen, though, is in the end there is: “But I will trust you. Because I believe you are good and you are just and you are righteous and you are working things that I just don’t understand.”

We might say, “Okay, God is working all things for good. He is powerful. He is able to do it. So what is the purpose for my life? What is he trying to do? What are those good things?” I would say that I don’t know everything God has planned for your life, but here in our passage Paul tells us one, for sure purpose. There are others, but we know for sure from here at least one thing that God is doing. And that is that he is making us more and more like Christ.

Look at the chain. All things work together for good. If you know God and have been called by God all things work together for good. **Here is what good looks like: You will be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. That word “conformed” means he is conforming, molding, shaping, sculpting you to more and more resemble his Son. That’s good news. That’s good news to look like him, to think like him, to act like him – to be more like him. This is the ultimate good that God is working out in your life.**

Maybe some of these words make you feel uncomfortable. That’s understandable. Sometimes when we encounter extreme power we will feel uncomfortable. Remember, there is none like God. There is none like him. When we come in contact with that, we shouldn’t think it’s always going to feel easy and comfortable.

It seems like a million years ago that I was on a ship for some summer duty I had to do when I was in military school. I was on a Marine Corps scholarship and there were some duties I had on summers and weekends. One summer I was on ship and I was assigned to work in the electrician’s department. I got to know these guys and they were really nice and fun. One day one of the guys said, “Hey, Adam, want to try something?” I said, “Sure.” He’s like, “Okay, hold...” Anytime someone wants you to hold a piece of electrical equipment, think twice. He was like, “Look, hold this.” It was

basically a light bulb and a generator. He did warn me a little bit. “Okay, this is going to be kind of neat. We are going to light the light bulb through your body.” Yeah, purpose with no power. Basically, I held one of the leads and put my other hand on the light bulb. It was like a fluorescent light bulb and he had a crank. The last thing I remember was a little flash of light coming from the light bulb. I’m telling you, it felt like someone punched me directly in the chest. He cranked it like half a crank and it felt like I got tackled by a 400 pound linebacker. It was unbelievable how much power came at me in such a small dose. It wasn’t lethal or anything like that, but they were catching me. “Hey, you okay? You okay?” I was like, “Yeah, I’m good, and never will do that again.”

Just imagine the God of the universe, who with his words spoke, and things were created. He spoke the earth into existence. What kind of power does he possess? If God is who he says he is (as we read throughout the Bible), if he is even a portion of what he says that he is (and we believe he is all of it), if what we read in the Bible is true, then his power cannot be comprehended. And when we are confronted with some of the major truths about who he is, it should cause us to go, “Whoa, I don’t even understand how this happens.”

He says, “Those he foreknew and predestined.” We might hear those words and just go, “Ugh. I don’t want to think things are fixed. What did he know?” Look, we need God to be knowledgeable. We need him to be knowing all things and powerful over all things and sovereign over all things. This text isn’t even a full description about how all of that happens, but it’s a piece of it. This is the character of God. And if God is really God, then he is so much bigger than we can comprehend. His knowledge, his ability, his power is so big and so alien to us that it should make us feel uncomfortable from time to time.

If we read this whole book and don’t ever go, “Whoa – that was weird,” then we are not reading it right. We are trying to make it fit what we want it to say. We always want to let the word speak for itself. These words, this concept is not meant to make us scared. It’s meant to bring us comfort.

These words, these truths are here to encourage us, to remind us that in a world where nothing is consistent, nothing is sure, we have a God who is so powerful, so intentional, and so good that he is working every situation out.

He is working every situation in life to make us more like him, to make us more and more a part of the family. That’s what he is saying. He is saying that he is the firstborn of many brothers, that we are brought into the family. Don’t take offense at that. The firstborn had all the rights and privileges

to the house, had all the inheritance. God is saying, “Look, brothers and sisters...” He is the big brother. We are engaged in life with him. We are part of the family with him. We are becoming more and more like the firstborn, beloved son with all rights and privileges. And it is going to happen. It is guaranteed that God is working this. When God says he will do it, he will do it, because he is powerful and purposeful.

So we just say, “Yes, man, predestine away. Thank you that you are working in this and that it will happen and it will come to pass.” That is security. Everything that we are trying to do for ourselves in this life, to build walls and communities around us, to bring safety and security to us – we have it here in the Lord, in Christ. It doesn’t mean that we will never experience suffering. Look, he didn’t promise “no suffering.” **Jesus didn’t suffer so that we wouldn’t suffer. He suffered so that when we suffer we will become more like him.**

The gospel doesn’t promise us better life circumstances; it promises us a better life. That is good news. The better life is becoming like Christ. There is a promise attached to all of this. We see that coming in verse 30 -- in his purpose, his power, his promise. You can see how they are all closely tied in.

III. Our security is found in God’s promise.

Look how he finishes. The chain continues. It says those he foreknew he predestined. Then in verse 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.” This is how he finishes for us. This is the promise. **The promise is that he will finish what he started.**

Do you have a friend who is great at starting things but can’t finish anything? They are great getting things going, but you know it will never get done. The Lord is not like that. He is so unlike us. When he says that those whom he called he justified – that word “justified” is so precious to us. That is God saving us. When he declares us justified that means although we are sinners he has made us right. He has declared us righteous. Then that next word “glorified” -- that’s the promise that when he begins the work in us he will finish it. **This is security. He will finish what he started.**

We see it in Philippians 1:6. “I’m sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” That day of Jesus Christ – we could tie that right back into

verse 30 here when he says, “Those whom he justified he also glorified.” He doesn’t say he will glorify. He says it’s done. He also glorified. It is completed. Although we don’t live in the reality of that fully, in the full completion of that, that glorification is when this life ends there is a promise of a life to come. There is a promise of a new life. God promises that all things will work out for good in this life. But it will ultimately lead to a new life, a better life that’s to come. **His purpose and power make sure that his promise is absolute.**

This promise doesn’t trivialize suffering. What it is, it’s the only answer to suffering. It’s the only answer to the troubles that we have in this life. There is a loving, merciful, gracious God, who is taking everything for all of us in this room, in this city, in this state, country, world, and he is working all of those things out for good. Let that encourage your souls. Let that encourage your heart. **God is working for you, for me, for those whom he has poured his love on. If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, if you have trusted him for the salvation of your souls, for the forgiveness of your sin, then this promise is for you.**