

Faith Pulpit

Eternal Security

Evangelical Christians continue to be divided over the issue of whether or not truly saved persons can forfeit their salvation. Certain biblical passages have been used to support each of the views. In this brief article, the major views will be presented, and the view which this author believes to be the correct one will be supported by an examination of Romans 8:28-30.

View #1: Truly saved persons can forfeit salvation by sinning but may regain salvation by repentance.

According to this view, sin destroys the believer's relationship to Christ. Among those who hold this view, there is no agreement over the number of sins it would take to cause a believer to become lost. Some argue that one unconfessed sin will produce this effect. Others argue that such a view does not leave room for the chastening by God of a disobedient believer. On the other hand, if it takes more than one sin to "unsave" a believer, the question arises whether or not believers may have full assurance that they are still saved.

View #2: Truly saved persons can forfeit salvation only by renouncing their faith in Christ; once this happens, it is impossible for them to be saved again.

According to this view, there is a parallel between obtaining salvation and forfeiting it. Just as one does not obtain salvation through good works but through faith in Christ, so one does not forfeit that salvation by his or her works but through a deliberate renunciation of faith in Christ.

View #3: God chooses and predestines certain people to be saved apart from any foreseen faith or works.

Christ died to save and keep saved only these people. A professing believer will continue to persevere if he or she is really one of God's elect. According to this view, an elect person cannot forfeit salvation

and become lost. But certain knowledge of one's own salvation is not possible, because the person's works, i.e., perseverance, rather than the promise of God, are the means by which one is assured of salvation. That one has faith in Christ is not sufficient to convey full assurance because, according to this view, God sometimes gives a counterfeit faith to non-elect persons which appears inwardly and outwardly to be similar to genuine saving faith.

View #4: True believers in Christ are eternally secure because of God's protecting plan.

They can be absolutely certain of their own present and future salvation through the promises of God found in the gospel. According to this view, the emphasis is not upon the believer's responsibility to persevere, but rather upon the Savior's promise to keep saved all those who are truly saved.

Romans 8:28–30 Verse 28: In this verse we are “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Two things should be noticed: first, the verse does not say, “everything that happens to a believer is good;” instead it tells us everything that happens to a believer is working toward a goal which is properly called good. (In the next two verses this “good” goal will be identified); second, the same people are described in two ways: (1) those who love God and (2) those who are the called ones according to God's purpose.

Verse 29 & 30: These two verses explain God's purpose (or plan) by focusing our attention on five specific things which God does to “them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (v. 28).

1. God foreknew them (v. 29). For the purpose of this study, it doesn't make any difference whether foreknew refers to mere passive awareness that these people would believe in Christ, or to a divine determination to bring them to saving faith. We do know, however, that God “hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9).

2. God predestined them (v. 29). This clearly means more than mere passive awareness: God determined something ahead of time concerning these people who “love God” (v. 28). God determined that these people should be “conformed to the image of his Son” (v. 29). If we ask, “When will believers be conformed to the image of Christ?”, the biblical answer is found in 1 John 3:2, “and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” *The goal of God's predestination is the believer's transformation when Christ comes again.*

3. God called them (v. 30). We know from passages such as Ephesians 1:4–5 and 1 Peter 1:2 the time of God's foreknowing and predestinating. These occurred before creation, God's calling, however, occurs during the life of the believer. And this call is not the general invitation for “whosoever will.”

According to Romans 8:30, the ones whom God calls, He also justifies.

4. God justified them (v. 30). Several things must be emphasized here: first, being justified means having ALL our sins forgiven and blotted out of God's records (Acts 13:38,39). This includes future sins as well as those of the past and present. The point of Hebrews 10:1–18 is that year-by-year sacrifices brought year-by-year forgiveness and a reminder that next year another sacrifice would be needed (Hebrews 10:1–3), whereas Christ's once-for-all sacrifice brings a once-for-all forgiveness (Hebrews 10:10–14). Old Testament believers were aware that all their past sins had been forgiven (Leviticus 16:30). We must be aware that ALL our sins have been forgiven (Hebrews 10:15–18).

Second, while there are no Bible verses that specifically tell persons whether or not God has foreknown or predestined them, there are verses that say we can KNOW whether or not we have been justified. In Romans 5:9 we read, “much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” ***You can know that God has foreknown and predestined you***, because God has foreknown, predestined and called the ones whom He has justified (“Moreover whom he did predestine, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified”, Romans 8:30). Knowing that we have been justified through faith in Christ's death and resurrection gives us assurance that God has foreknown, predestined and called us, as well.

Since the goal of this predestination is being among those who are transformed at Christ's coming, if we know that we have been justified, we can know also that our future salvation is guaranteed.

5. God glorified them (v. 30). Here is yet another proof of our security: “and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (v. 30). ***It is not possible to be justified and then fail to be glorified!*** The goal described as “good” in verse 28 is our glorification. In verse 29 this same goal was described as our being “conformed to the image of his Son.” ***Let us thank God for His promise, not only to save us but to keep us saved until we arrive in heaven!***

Dr. Myron J. Houghton

Former Chair of Theology at [Faith Baptist Theological Seminary](#) | [Other Articles](#)

Myron Houghton (Ph.D., Th.D.) began his ministry in 1971 at Denver Baptist Bible College as head of the Theology Department and joined the faculty at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in 1983 when the two schools merged. He retired from FBTS in May 2019 after nearly 50 years of teaching.

Dr. Houghton was promoted to Heaven on July 13, 2020, leaving a legacy of service and faithfulness to the thousands of men and women who he impacted during his ministry.