

“Are You a ‘Control Freak’? Romans 8:28-31

TEXT/INTRO: Do you know anyone who is a control freak? They have to be in control of everything, including those around them at any given moment. I know and have known people like that. I don't like being around them. For instance, the people I have in mind are men who by nature, dominate and direct every conversation as though they were assigned to direct everything I want to talk about to what they want to talk about or, and this is far worse, to beat me into submission (metaphorically) that I might embrace their opinions and theirs only. They have to assert their presence as the only one that counts. They are no different when I steer the conversation to the things of God. They think they're too big to even entertain the notion that God is the one in control...of everything.

Did you know that millions of men and women take control of their eternal destiny without realizing it by insisting on doing “religion” their way? My late father was one of those millions.

Way back around 1980, I and my family were having lunch with my mom and dad at a restaurant in Monroe, N.C., when I asked dad about his relationship with Jesus. He dismissed the idea by saying, “Don't worry about me. Me and God have things worked out.” A couple of months later, February, 1981, he died. Hebrews 9:27 says this, ²⁶ *Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

²⁷ *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,* (Heb. 9:26-27 NAU) When I got the call that Wednesday night, February 4, 1981, that daddy had passed, I was crushed. I was convinced that he went to hell and I cried out (literally) to God to have mercy on my daddy. His answer was simply, “Johnny, I will do what is right.” I was satisfied. And, yes, I heard that in my mind and spirit almost as though it were an audible voice.

One of my mantras is **“It's all about Jesus.”** Another one is, **“our justification/salvation is all of God.”** And out of the hundreds of

Scripture text that tell me those two mantras are true, my go to text is our text for today, Rom. 8:28-34.

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

²⁹ *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*

³⁰ *and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*

³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*

³³ *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;*

³⁴ *who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (Rom. 8:28-34 NAU)*

If you're a control freak, you probably don't like that passage. It speaks volumes of God's singular role in the justification of those whom He calls. If you profess faith in Christ and yet believe that you were the primary mover in your justification/salvation, you are in for a rude awakening. If you, a sinner, dead in your trespasses and sins, spiritually separated from God which is what the Bible means by death, honestly believe that you had as much to do with your salvation as God did, you really need to examine yourself to see if you are in fact in Christ.

Read this, ²⁷ *but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,*

²⁸ *and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,*

²⁹ *so that no man may boast before God.*

³⁰ But *by His doing* *you are in Christ Jesus*, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

³¹ *so that*, just as it is written, **"LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."** (1 Cor. 1:27-31 NAU)

Ephesians 2:4

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

⁵ **even when we were dead in our transgressions**, ***made us alive*** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**

⁹ **not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

¹⁰ **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

(Eph. 2:4-10 NAU)

I'm going to make a few observations from our Romans text this morning that are intended to glorify God and the Lord Jesus and the ministry of the Spirit, exalt the written word of God and build you up in your faith-walk with the Lord Jesus. And in so doing I will not assume anything about you.

But know this, your and my eternal destinies are solely in the hands of the God who gave us life by His Spirit and through the preaching and believing the gospel. To think otherwise is to deny God's sovereignty and mercy and love manifest in the Lord Jesus by His life, suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. How can anyone even think of taking the glory for all that for themselves?

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

²⁹ *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*

³⁰ *and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

I have been a Southern Baptist only since 1988. Before that I was a Presbyterian in a PCUS church that had a strong Charismatic element. After leaving the PCUS in 1983 and was without a church home, a co-worker invited me to his church for their fall revival. I went and found myself feeling like I had come home. I knew zilch about Southern Baptists back then and I became convinced that the SBC was the only remaining denomination that still preached the word of God and Jesus as Lord. I am more convinced of that now then way back then. But that's my opinion, not the voice of God.

Therein lies the rub, Baptists have the notion that they save themselves by cooperating with God in a co-equal kind of way. They are convinced that they have as much to do with their justification as God does. When it comes right down to it, they have the final say. The Bible says otherwise.

Those dead in their trespasses and sins must first be called before they can call upon the name of the Lord to be saved.

You will no doubt remember this from the gospel of John, John 6:44, ⁴⁴ *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.*

⁴⁵ *"It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.*

(Jn. 6:44-45 NAU)

And this from just a few verses later, ⁶³ *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

⁶⁴ *"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.*

⁶⁵ *And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."*

⁶⁶ *As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. (Jn. 6:63-66 NAU)*

That reflects the spiritual state of millions of souls on planet Earth, it's my way or the highway. They must insist that their salvation is up to them rather than God. The dead do not realize they are dead except God draw them to His Son and then give them life.

I close with this, ¹⁶ *For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,*

¹⁷ *(as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of **Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead** and calls into being that which does not exist. (Rom. 4:16-17 NAU)*