

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

STUDY ONE

A Treasure You Must Not Miss

Romans 8:28–30

This is a warning—a warning about living your life and missing one of the great treasures God has preserved for you. You might even be missing it repeatedly, year after year. What treasure am I referring to? The providence of God.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

How quickly does a year breeze past! Each January, some look back at the past year with heads held high as they check off all their accomplished goals. Others, however, might throw away that old calendar feeling a sense of disappointment or even regret. The year came and went, and all the checkboxes alongside those plans and ambitions remain empty.

Many know well the feelings of irritation, frustration, worry, and discouragement as they stand on the edge of a new year. The dissatisfaction seems unavoidable. In fact, even achieved resolutions often fail to eradicate these feelings. Something greater is required, something divine.

We can only cast out the darkness of our difficulties, failures, and worries by truly acknowledging and embracing the goodness of God's guiding hand in our lives. As you prepare to enter this new year, do not miss the shining treasure that has the power to brighten even the darkest nights . . . the providence of God.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). Scripture acts as the light that will guide us as we seek to sharpen our perspective about God this year. Offer this prayer as you open God’s Word.

Father, thank You for making Yourself known to me through Your Word. I ask that You would reveal yourself to me more as I study Your Word today and throughout this year. Help me to know You and to serve You well. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

“No one is righteous—not even one” (Romans 3:10). Paul penned these pointed words to conclude the opening section of his letter to the Christians in Rome. He wanted his readers to understand the depth of their sin. Only then would they understand that God owed them no blessing—that they could not earn the gift of salvation by their own grit and determination.

Paul didn’t stop with the bad news, though. Truly, sinners cannot save themselves, but there is someone who can. Read [Romans 3:21–22](#), and summarize Paul’s explanation of the basis of salvation.

In light of this world-changing truth, Paul dedicated the remainder of his letter to answering the question, “So what?” How does someone who knows Christ look different from someone who doesn’t? Let’s turn to Romans 8:28–30 to find out!



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Romans 8:28–30



Observation: God's Good Plan for His People

When Pastor Chuck Swindoll studies the Scriptures, he always starts with the same question: “What does this passage say?”¹ Observing a passage often feels like slow, monotonous work, but it sets the foundation for correct interpretation and practical application. And careful observation is *especially* important when studying familiar passages.

Read *Romans 8:28–30* a few times using several different Bible translations to get a feel of what Paul was saying. Write below any words or phrases that stand out to you.

According to *8:28* who benefits from the providential outworking of God's plan? Paul talked about *one* group of people, but he used *two* different descriptions. List them below. (Hint: Look for the word *who*.)

1. _____
2. _____

Terms like *predestination* or *foreknowledge* sometimes become entangled with complicated ideas that don't always find their basis in Scripture. Don't feel intimidated, though! This study's passage focuses more on the *why?* and less on the *how?* of predestination. According to *8:29*, for what reason did God predestine, or choose, His people?



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Romans 8:28–30

You'll become more like Jesus than you have ever been before if you heed this warning and if you claim this treasure and live it out. This change begins in the mind, moves to the heart, and becomes a part of the driving force of your life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

List in order the verbs in *Romans 8:30*.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Who is the one who has ultimate responsibility for the actions Paul discusses in this passage?

God works together *all* things for the good of those who love Him. He's not in control of *some* things. He controls everything. What a comfort it is to know that our God is not surprised by anything that occurs in our lives!



Interpretation: God's Providence

Romans 8:28–30 sits atop many peoples' list of favorite passages—and rightly so! When reading these beloved verses, it is easy to skim over the words without stopping to ask, “What does this passage *mean*?” Wrestling with this question guides us to sound interpretation.



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Romans 8:28–30

What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers and sisters? Look at *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org to guide your answer. How should seeing Jesus as our firstborn brother affect the way we see our own standing before God?

Using a Bible dictionary, look up the terms *justification* and *glorification*. When do each of these events occur in the life of a follower of Jesus? What does *Romans 8:30* reveal about the *scope* of God's saving work in an individual? Summarize your findings below.

What does this passage reveal about the character of God? What attributes does Paul highlight most clearly? Why is this passage so important for shaping our perspective about God's work in our lives?



A Treasure You Must Not Miss

Romans 8:28–30

God's providence is His care and preparation before we live our lives. All planned, all arranged, all put together so that we see His hand in every detail of our lives. Every one. The good, the bad, even the indifferent. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Providence. What a complex yet beautiful idea. While this passage does teach about the role of providence in our lives, examining an image of this attribute provides a fuller understanding of God's character.



Correlation: Clay in the Potter's Hands

In a time when the Israelites feared conquest by foreign nations, the people questioned God's plan. The prophet Jeremiah arrived to address these concerns and to reassure the Israelites of God's providence by using the image of a *potter*.

Read *Jeremiah 18:1–6*. To whom does Jeremiah compare the potter? What does the clay represent? What can the potter do with the clay?

What does this imagery of the potter and the clay reveal about God's providence and His plan for His people?

We are the clay in the potter's good hands, and He carefully shapes us into the image of His Son. Understanding the role of God's providence in our lives today can greatly aid us on our journey toward Christlikeness.



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Romans 8:28–30

Application: Trusting in God's Providence Today

As you consider application, look at the passage one more time. In Greek, Romans 8:28–29 reads as one long sentence in which Paul identifies two truths “we know.” Both truths provide us with a better understanding of God's providence. *We know that . . .*

1. God works everything together for the good of those who love Him and are called by Him.
2. God knew His people in advance.

What behaviors or beliefs might be hindering you from embracing these two truths about God's providence? Is it too much focus on the immediate, or a limited perspective, or something else? Record your thoughts below.

To go further, our world events, our personal lives are not ruled by chance or fate or luck or coincidence. All of God's acts are filled with His wisdom. The arrangement He has put together for each one of us is perfectly designed to shape us, ultimately, into the image of His Son. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Think back on the past year of your life. Did you face any particularly difficult moments or events? How do you sense God, in His providence, working through these events for your good and your growth? How can embracing God's providence over your life help you in the year ahead?



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Romans 8:28–30

As you step into a New Year, do not miss the treasure of God's providence. Unexpected happiness may come, and when it does, give the glory to God for His goodness. You also might face some hardship. Remember that God wants to use these trials to bring you closer to Himself and to form you into the likeness of Jesus. God is good, and He is near.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your providence. Thank You for watching over every detail of my life and working everything together for my good and for Your glory. I ask You to remind me of Your providence throughout this new year so that I might see You working in my life even when it feels like You aren't. I pray these things in Jesus' providential name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself.](#)"

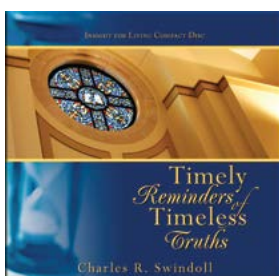


A Treasure You Must Not Miss

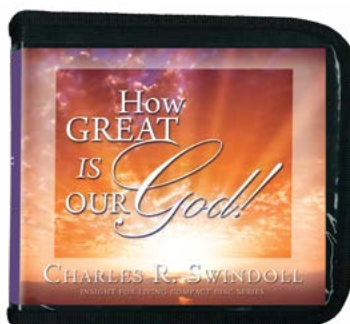
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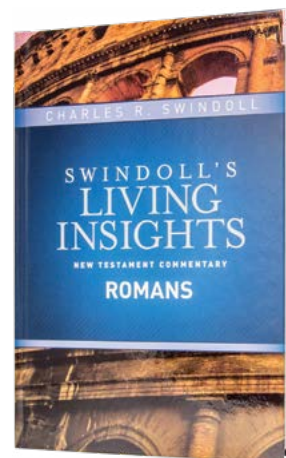
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For the 2021–2022 broadcasts of *God's Providence and Sovereignty*, *Searching the Scriptures* studies were developed by Brad Smith, writer, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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