

THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION IN ROMANS 8:29,30

(Romans 8:29,30)

“For whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified”

Introduction

The Apostle, having given many reasons in the preceding text for believers to have comforted hearts while enduring patiently the sufferings of this present time, now points to the source of their future glory in order to assure them of its certainty. He declared in the previous verse that *all things* work together for good for them who love God; but it is essential to understand that our love to God is not the cause of His love to us, but the results of His loving us (cf. Deut.7:6-8; Jer.1:5).

At the close of verse 28, Paul adds: “... who are the called according to His purpose.” This declaration leads to this momentous revelation of verse 29.

I. *For whom He foreknew*

“Foreknow”:

Three possible meanings:

1. Knowledge of things before they come into existence
2. Knowledge accompanied by a decree (Acts 2:23)
 - (1) “The foreknowledge of God necessarily implies His purpose or decree with respect to the thing foreknown. For God foreknows what will be by determining what shall be. God’s foreknowledge cannot in itself be the cause of any event; but events must be produced by His decree and ordination. It is not because God foresees a thing that it is decreed; but He foresees it is ordained by Him to happen in the order of His providence. Therefore His foreknowledge and decrees cannot be separated; for the one implies the other. When He decrees that a thing *shall be*, He foresees that it will be.”
 - (2) God determined with Himself from eternity everything He executes in time (Acts 15:18). Nothing is contingent in the mind of God – (Jesus Christ was not delivered by God foreknowing it before it took place, but by His fixed ordination.
Thus believers are called elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father (1 Pet.1:1-3,17-21)
3. Knowledge of love and approval – to choose & recognize as His own (Rom.11:2) – “Foreknow” used in this sense in Romans 8:29)
 - (1) Apostle states that God’s foreknowledge is the reason why God has not rejected His people
 - (2) Ps.1:6; 1 Cor.8:3; Gal.4:9; Amos 3:2
 - (3) At the Great White Judgment, Jesus Christ will say, “I never *knew* you” (Mt.7:23) cf. Rom.8:33
 - (4) Foreknowledge here not foreknowledge of faith or good works; faith cannot be the cause of foreknowledge, because foreknowledge is before

predestination, and faith is the result of predestination (Acts 13:48; Eph.2:10; 2 Tim.1:9)

- (5) By this foreknowledge is meant the love of God toward those whom He predestinates to be saved through Jesus Christ. All the called of God are foreknown by Him

II. *He also did predestinate*

1. Foreknowledge & predestination are to be distinguished

- (1) The one is the choice of persons, the other is the destination of those persons
- (2) To predestinate signifies to appoint beforehand to some particular end
- (3) In Scripture it is taken sometimes generally for any decree of God (Acts 4:28; 1 Cor.2:7)
- (4) Sometimes this word is used specially for the salvation of man (Eph.1:5; Rom.8:29)
- (5) Rom.8:29 – refers only to those on whom God has placed His love from eternity, & on whom He purposes to bestow life through Jesus Christ
- (6) As the union which we have with Him is the foundation of all the good which we receive from God, consequently we must be elected in Him – i.e. God gives us to Him to be His members and to partake of all the good things to which God has predestinated us.
 - (a) The cause of predestination is traced solely to God (Eph.1:5)
 - (b) God has no cause out of Himself to move Him to this marvelous grace
 - (c) It is necessarily by grace – free, unmerited favor (1 Jn.4:10,19)
 - (d) Calvin: “It is a foolish inference of these disputants, who say that God has elected such only as He foresaw would be worthy of grace”
- (7) The *foundation* of predestination is Jesus Christ (1 Thess.5:9)
- (8) The *means* are our calling & justification
- (9) The *final end* of predestination is the glory of God (Rom.9:23; Eph.1:6; Col.3:12; 1 Pet.2:9)

2. In the election of some, and the passing by of others, the wisdom of God is manifest; for by this, He demonstrates both His justice & mercy

- (1) Otherwise one of these attributes of God would not be seen
 - (a) If all men had been released from their corruption & sin, the justice of God would not have been manifested in the punishment of sin
 - (b) If none had been chosen, the mercy of God would not have been seen
 - (c) In the salvation of the chosen. God displayed His grace; and in the punishment of sin, He displayed His justice and hatred of iniquity
- (2) This doctrine of election is comforting to the believer, and is the source of the Christian’s assurance of salvation (Jn.10:28; 6:37,44,65)
 Luther admonished Erasmus: “If, my Erasmus, you consider these paradoxes (as you term them) to be no more than the inventions of men, why are you so extraordinarily heated by this occasion? In that case, your arguments affect not me; for there is no person now living in the world who is more an avowed to the doctrines of men than myself. But if you believe the doctrines in debate between us to be (as indeed they are) the doctrines of God, you must here bid adieu to all senses of shame and decency thus to oppose them. I will not ask whither is the modesty of Erasmus fled, but which is must more important, where, alas, are you fear and reverence of the Deity, when you roundly declare that this branch of truth, which He has revealed from heaven, is at best useless and unnecessary to know? What shall the glorious Creator be taught by you, His creature, what is fit to be preached, and what to be suppressed?”

Is the adorable God so very defective in wisdom and prudence as not to know till you instruct Him, what would be *useful* and not pernicious? Or, could not He, whose understanding is infinite, foresee, previous to His revelation of this doctrine, what would be the consequences of His revealing it, till these consequences were pointed out to *you*? You cannot, you dare not, say this. If, then, it was the Divine pleasure to make known these things in His Word, and to bid His messengers to publish them abroad, and to leave the consequences of their so doing to the wisdom and providence of Him in whose name they speak, and whose message they declare, who art thou, O Erasmus, that thou shouldst reply against God?"

III. *To be conformed to the image of His Son*

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the model after which all the elect of God must be formed
 - (1) Man was created in the image of God (Gen.1:17); but when sin entered, he lost this image; and Adam "... became a father of a son *in his own likeness* ..." (Gen.5:3) – Therefore, he communicated to all his posterity his sinful nature
 - (2) But God had ordained to save some of this fallen race (Eph.1:5)
 - (3) This election of some of sinful man came to pass through the incarnation of the Son of God (Heb.1:3)
 - (4) The image of the Son of God is stamped on all believers when they are adopted into His family
2. Believers become "... partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Pet.1:4) cf. Eph.4:24; 2:10; 1 Cor.6:17; Phil.3:21
 - (1) All God foreknew are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ
 - (2) As they have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly Adam (1 Cor.15:47-49)
3. Believers are conformed to the image of the Son of God in holiness & suffering in this present life and in glory in the life to come
 - (1) They are conformed in holiness (1 Cor.1:30; 2 Cor.3:18; Col.3:10)
 - (2) They are conformed in suffering (Isa.53:3; Col.1:24; Heb.2:10; Lk.22:28; Rom.8:17)

IV *That He might be the firstborn among many brethren*

1. Next to the glory of God, the object of Christ's incarnation was the salvation of a multitude which no man can number (Rev.7:9) of those whose nature He assumed, and this was accomplished by His death (Jn.12:24; 2 Tim.1:9; Tit.1:2)
2. By His death, He brought *many* to salvation (Isa.53:11; Heb.9:28; Jn.17:1,2; Rom.5:19; Heb.2:10; Rom.5:15; Heb.2:11)
3. Under the Law, the *firstborn* had authority over their brethren, and they received a double portion, as well as serving as priests
4. The word *firstborn* also signifies what surpasses anything else of the same kind
 - (1) The firstborn of the poor (Isa.14:30)
 - (2) The firstborn of death (Job 18:13)
5. The term *firstborn* is applied to those who were most beloved, as Ephraim is called the firstborn of the Lord (Jer.31:9)
6. The designation of firstborn belongs to Jesus Christ, both as to the superiority of His nature, of His office as Savior, and of His glory
 - (1) Regarding His *nature*, He was as to His deity, truly the firstborn, for He alone is the only-begotten – the eternal Son of the Father (Jn.1:14,18; 3:16,18)

- (2) In this respect, He is the Son of God by *nature*, while His brethren (Mt.12:48-50; et.al.) are sons of God by grace
- (3) Regarding His *office*, He is their King, their Head, their Lord, their Priest, their Prophet, their Surety, their Advocate with the Father – in a word, their Savior
- (4) See 1 Cor.1:30; 1 Pet.2:9; Phil.2:9,10; Col.1:18; 1 Cor.15:20

V. *and whom He predestined, these He also called*

1. Apostle connects our calling, which is known, to God's decree, which is concealed (2 Pet.1:10)
 - (1) Those whom God has predestined He has also called and justified; and those whom He has called and justified, He has elected and predestinated
 - (2) If God has called us, then He has elected us
 - (3) God calls them by His grace (Gal.1:15)
2. Many are called (invited) but few are chosen (Mt.22:14)
 - (1) Passages which declare Christ's death to be for the whole world (Jn.3:16; 2 Cor.5:19; Heb.2:9; 1 Jn.2:2)
 - (2) The word *cosmos* (world) usually refers to a satanic system which is antigod in character (though in a few instances it refers to the unregenerate people who are in the *cosmos* (Jn.15:18,19; 17:16; 1 Jn.5:19)
 - (3) Passages which are all-inclusive in their scope (2 Cor.5:14; 1 Tim.2:6; 4:10; Tit.2:11; Rom.5:6)
 - (4) Passages which offer a universal gospel to men (Jn.3:16; Acts 10:43; Rev.22:17; et. al.) -- the word *whosoever* is used at least 110 times in the New Testament and always with the unrestricted meaning
 - (5) A special passage in 2 Peter 2:1 -- ungodly false teachers of the last days who bring swift destruction upon themselves are said to "deny the Master (Lord) who bought them"
3. At three periods, all mankind were called
 - (1) Through Adam (Gen.6:3)
 - (2) By Noah (Gen.6:11)
 - (3) By the Apostles (Col.1:23)

(How soon in each period was the external call forgotten by the vast majority)
4. This calling (vv.28,30) is an effectual calling, and involves more than the external calling of the Word
 - (1) It is God who gives the increase (1 Cor.3:6)
 - (2) It is God who opens the heart to receive the Word (Acts 16:14)
 - (3) It is God who gives a new heart (Ezek.36:26) – who writes His law in it
 - (4) It is God who saves His people (Tit.3:5)
5. Meaning of the word *called* in this passage is the outward calling by the Word, accompanied with the operation of God, by His Spirit, in the conversion and regeneration of sinners (Mt.4:19)
 - (1) Regeneration is not a work of God which is accomplished gradually – it is effected instantaneously
 - (2) There is no medium between life or death: a man is either dead in sin or quickened by the new birth; he is either in Christ or out of Christ (Eph.5:14; Jn.6:44)
6. All who are elected are effectually called, and all who are effectually called have been from all eternity elected and ordained to eternal salvation
7. As those whom God has predestinated He has called, so He has effectually called none besides (Tit.1:1; 2 Tim.1:9; 1 Pet.1:15; 2:9; Gal.1:6)

8. Calling, as the effect of predestination, must be irresistible, or rather invincible, and also irreversible
9. Can man resist the calling of God? When the calling is only external, and not accompanied with the internal operation of the Holy Spirit, a person can, and always will resist it (Gen.6:3; Acts 7:51)
10. What about the saying of Jesus? "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" (Mt. 11:21) – the reference is to Christ's miracles, not His preaching
 - (1) Hardness of heart of those of Chorazin and Bethsaida greater than that of Tyre & Sidon
 - (2) If these miracles had been performed in Tyre & Sidon, they would have repented concerning the miracles – (does not say that they would have repented unto life under the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit) – cf. Mt. 11:25-27; Jn. 10:26)

VI. *and whom He called, these He also justified*

1. Those whom the Holy Spirit effectually calls are also justified
2. They are ungodly until the moment they are called (Rom. 4:5)
3. We are justified by faith, which we receive when we are effectually called

VII. *and whom He justified, these He also glorified*

1. A man is justified the moment he believes; and here being glorified is connected with justification
2. To be glorified is to be completely conformed to the glorious image of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:42-57)
3. Glorification is spoken of as having already taken place because what God has determined to do may be said to be already completed (cf. Isa. 9:6)
4. The plan of salvation is here presented in its commencement, in the intermediate steps of its progress, and in its consummation – its commencement is in the eternal purpose of God, and its consummation in the eternal glory of the elect
5. The same doctrine is found in other places: 1 Corinthians 1:30, "Of Him" (by God, according to His sovereign election) "you are in Christ Jesus" (by the divine appointment of God) "who became to us wisdom from God," (in our calling) "righteousness" (by the imputation of His righteousness) "sanctification" (in making us conformed to His image), "and redemption" (in giving to us eternal glory) -- also see: 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13
6. All the links of the chain by which man is drawn to Christ (as seen in Rom. 8:30) are all of pure grace!

Conclusion

In reviewing this passage, it should be noted that, in all that is stated, man has no part, but he is passive, and **all is done by God!** Man elected, predestinated, called, justified and glorified by God. In this demonstration of pure grace, there is no place for chance or change; He will perfect and complete that which He has declared (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12).

This doctrine leaves no room for license!! (Tit. 2:11, 12). **But let every believer glory in this marvelous grace of God by which he is predestinated, and called, and justified, and glorified!!**

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