

ROMANS 8:29-30 "For Those God Foreknew He Also Predestined"

Romans 8:29-30 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.

We ended last week with verse 28 which is so comforting to the church because it gives hope in times of seeming hopelessness; it gives purpose to events and circumstances which seem to be at a loss for any purpose, and it gives direction during times of wandering.

But most important, it directs our eyes back to the Sovereign God "who causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who have been called according to His purpose."

Paul is about to expand on this call of God in the next few verses and he will put into focus what it means to be one of the called and what blessings are attached to this call.

But this call is never without a purpose and it is God's purpose to work out His sovereign plan to His glory through the lives of individuals whom He purchased and adopted into His forever family. And our text this morning continues to demonstrate that purpose as God is shown to bring His will to fruition.

God's purpose in Christ for humanity is conformity to Christ's glorious image. He purposed from all eternity to bring many sons to glory through the redemptive work of Christ. (Heb.2:10) The process He uses is found in Rom.8:29-30. The call to His purpose is through the Gospel which works with the word of God in accordance with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The call is universal and it goes out to all humanity everywhere. But it's a call that demands personal response; a turning from ourselves to embrace Jesus Christ as the One who can deliver us from the power and the penalty of sin, and give us new life and a new everlasting relationship with our God.

There is a problem, however, because this call must be made effectual if it is to be embraced by sinful people who are born with

a nature that is hostile to God because each person is dead in their sin and transgressions.

Paul brought this out earlier in this very chapter.

Romans 8:6-8 ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The issue that many raise at this point is one that determines that there are people who are naturally able to place themselves in the mindset of seeking the things of the Spirit, while others have their minds set on the flesh, and it's just a matter of choosing the things of the Spirit and embracing Christ by faith.

But Paul is not making the case that some people naturally seek the things of the Spirit that bring life, while others seek the flesh that brings death. Paul is stating that the natural man, that man who is born with a nature like Adam's, is already in the flesh and is not even able to subject himself to the things of the Spirit because that Adamic nature is hostile toward God.

In other words, there are not two types of people in the world: those who desire to seek the things of the Spirit and those who don't. Rather, all men are of the flesh and unable and unwilling to naturally seek the things of God.

And Paul has already made his case for the inability of the natural man to seek the things of God which would include recognizing the need to be forgiven of the penalty of sin as one then seeks the solution to that sin problem found only in Christ.

Romans 3:10-18 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT

KNOWN." ¹⁸ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Paul makes it abundantly clear that there are none who have the natural ability to seek after God or the Messiah Jesus because dead men, physically dead or spiritually, do not have any ability to respond.

Ephesians 2:1-3 ^{NAU} And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Therefore, man must be given a supernatural ability to overcome this death and this inability to seek God. In fact, this is precisely the point that Paul makes when writing to the Ephesians as he continues to show how dead men must be given a life from above before they see their need.

Ephesians 2:4-5 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),

And this is precisely why God must choose a people and predestine them to eternal life because outside of Him doing so all of us in Adam will always choose self, not God. To be foreknown by God is what Paul makes clear earlier in the letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:4-6 ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

To be chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ is to be foreknown by God, not in the sense that God foreknew the decision we would make, because as we have seen the only decision we can make is a decision in Adam with a nature that is spiritually dead in the darkness of our sin and that darkness cannot even comprehend the light.

John 1:4-5 ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵
The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

We, as dead people in our sins and transgressions, don't make ourselves alive by seeking God's solution to our sin problem, we are first made alive by God alone and then stand on the faith that the Spirit gives us as He gives us eyes to see and ears to hear.

This is precisely the point the prophet Ezekiel makes when the Lord revealed to him the vision of the dry bones on the valley floor.

Ezekiel 37:5-6 ⁵ "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶ I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

The dry bones didn't decide one day that it would be a good idea to gather their bones together and put flesh and sinews on their bones and give themselves the breath of life. Dry bones are simply a compilation of human parts that are dead. The best they can do is lie lifeless on the ground.

God must act first as He brings life to those bones and breathes the breath of life into them before they can stand. But when He does they do in fact stand.

Ezekiel 37:9-10 ⁹ Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"" ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Only those bones in whom God brings life are able to stand. The rest continue to scatter the ground with death. It is true as Paul says, ¹⁰ "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
(Romans 3:10-12)

The only one's who can accept the life of Christ are the one's Christ has first made alive even while we were dead in our transgressions and sins.

And this gets to the heart of our text which states that God must intervene and give life where there was none, before a human being can see and then seek the Savior. This is why He must choose those out of the world to be recipients of this life, because left on their own they would never seek Him.

Rom 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Sometimes there's the tendency to look at salvation in a Pied-Piper sort of fashion where the Piper goes through the town indiscriminately calling everyone out with his music. Not knowing anyone personally, he simply puts out a call and whoever comes, comes and who ever stays, stays.

But God is the all-knowing, Almighty One who determines the beginning from the end with the express purpose of bringing about His will which is to know us and for us to personally know and love Him.

William Barclay in his commentary on Romans speaks to this issue of foreknowledge when he singles out the word "to know" as applied to God knowing people in the sense of foreknowledge & predestination.

He says, "The O.T. has an illuminating use of the word "to Know". I knew you in the wilderness, said God to Hosea about the people of Israel (Hos 13:5). You only have I known of all the families of the earth, said God to Amos (Amos 3:2). When the Bible speaks of God knowing a man, it means that He has a purpose and a plan and a task for that man. And when we look back upon our Christian experience, all we can say is, "I did not do this; I could never have done this; God did everything: And we know well that this does not take freewill away. God knew Israel, but the day came when Israel refused the destiny God meant for her to have."

"For those God foreknew he also predestined..."

The word foreknew in our text is the Greek word *proginosko* and it simply means to know beforehand. The word predestined in the Greek is *proorizo* and it means to predetermine.

And so, if we were to go back to our text it could read Rom 8:29 "For those God knew (beforehand) he also (predetermined) to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

In the context he has been explaining the weakness of the flesh and how the Spirit strengthens us; even prays on our behalf. He has also told us how the cares of this world can be perceived to have no design at all, and yet we see clearly how God works all things together for our good according to His will and for His purposes.

He's showing us how God is in control of all things. Nothing is hid from God and nothing is outside of His Master plan which centers on the salvation of His people.

In the O.T. we saw how God chose a people to follow Him. And the question might be asked, what were the qualifications for these people to be called out by God? Were they to be noble, trustworthy, faithful? Were they required to have vast numbers in their tribe or nation, and possess wealth beyond measure?

If you and I were in the process of choosing someone for an important task, some of these qualifications, along with many more, would come into play. But notice why God chooses this people which would be known as Israel.

Deu 7:6-8 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

God chose them because He chose to love them according to a promise, a covenant, He made with Abraham. They were not a particularly lovely people, in fact if compared to the Egyptians they were probably very similar in many ways.

And yet we're told that God didn't choose the Egyptians, He chose the Israelites. Just as God chose Abraham, a Hebrew pagan worshipper many years before, and had made a covenant to bring him into a promised land, God was now fulfilling that promise in

Israel who is descended from Abraham, and He chooses them to carry out His will.

God did not consult with Israel and pour over His foreknowledge of what decisions they would make in the future to see if they were fit to follow Him. In fact, if God's foreknowledge of their future actions was an indication of their fitness some might fault God for choosing them in the first place.

But because God is sovereign over the affairs of His creation, including men, and because all is done according to His good will He foreknew them and He predestined them to be a holy people, which means a people set apart for a special purpose. Now I know that a lot of people cringe when we start talking about such things as God's foreknowledge and predestination.

But these terms should lose any repulsive feature because an individual's salvation isn't based on their moral state, but God predestining or choosing us to become children of God through Christ and also becoming Christ-like, set apart for His purpose.

God has the ultimate free will, even over His creation. The pot cannot say to the Potter, why did you make me like this? Like the choosing of Israel to be the nation through which the Messiah would come to redeem His people, His choice of a people belongs entirely to Him.

And because dead men won't respond He had to intervene in a choice He made before the creation of the world.

Ephesians 1:4 ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

No matter how you slice it, when you and I chose to embrace Christ for our salvation, it was entirely because of His choice for us before time. And in time, the Spirit of God begins to collect all of His people throughout time as He brings them to Himself. These are all of the people the Father has given to the Son to be called out from the darkness of this world.

John 6:37-39 ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

The Spirit of God accomplishes the Father's will through the Son by regenerating our dead spirits as He gives us eyes to see and ears to hear, and in the process gives us the ability to believe as even our faith is a gift from God as we then employ it unto life in Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 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.

But why would God go through all of the trouble of choosing a people for Himself when people naturally in Adam want nothing to do with God? Again, it goes back to His will for His good pleasure. And the people God chooses to give life to are the same people whom He calls out to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Romans 8:29 ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son,

Eph 1:4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

What does it mean to be conformed into the likeness of God's Son? There are actually three senses in which we were created to be conformed into the likeness of God's Son. You and I can only fully experience two of them.

The first one was in the Garden of Eden.... Gen 1:26-27 "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness... 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

From the very beginning we were created to reflect the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Only Adam and Eve did that perfectly until they sinned. Since that time man, though created to reflect his God, can only be a tarnished glimmer of the man he was supposed to be in fellowship with his Creator.

This perfect sinless state is not something you and I can experience in this life. It happened once with our first representatives.

But this brings up the second sense of being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Since the fall in the Garden men could not reflect the spiritual nature they had been given because that spiritual nature was dead to the things of God, having been cut off from a spiritual relationship with the Spiritual Creator because of sin.

This doesn't mean that sinful, separated men can't reflect anything of their Creator. Intelligence, wisdom, the ability to love and carry on relationships with other people all reflect the attributes which belong to God and have been given to all men. However, those attributes which we possess from God are imperfect.

Of course this is why God also chose to predestinate His beloved Son to come into this world to bring us back into a relationship with Himself.

Acts 2:22-24 ²² "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this *Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. ²⁴ "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

When we place our faith in Christ as Lord and Savior that ability to reflect our Creator and Savior is restored to a great degree. Where there was only death, life now exists. Where we only sought to please the flesh, the Spirit enables us to please God by faith.

The more we submit to the Spirit the more we are able to conform to the image of our Savior working in our lives. This is an inward working, not just some superficial conformity as Robertson says in his commentary on this portion of Romans. He also says that this Greek phrase "expresses the gradual change in us till we acquire the likeness of Christ the Son of God so that we ourselves shall ultimately have the family likeness of sons of God."

We have been saved to not only bear the family name, but to allow people to see the family resemblance to our heavenly Father here and now so that others may see Christ in us, the hope of glory.

And one day we will bear that resemblance perfectly. That is our glorious destiny on the other side in His presence, ultimately to reign with our Savior in the new heavens and new earth. And that is the third aspect of being conformed into the image of God's Son.

And that's why Paul says in verse 30 "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

In glory is when the fullness of our adoption comes into play. In glory is when we will see Him face to face.

1Jo 3:2 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

1Co 15:49-52 "And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

Our hope is in the resurrection and restoration of God's entire creation as we come into God's presence and enjoy His fellowship forever. But we must never forget that we have been called by God to be part of His family today. Today He desires that we reflect His Son's image and today He gives us His power by His Spirit to accomplish this.

That is His foreordained and predetermined will for our lives . But He calls us to walk in that will and not seek the flesh above the Spirit. The hope in this life is that as we seek Him and submit to Him on a daily basis He promises to bring us closer to Himself in this life with the hope that He will ultimately bring us home.

Conformity to Christ is a daily process known as sanctification. And with sanctification there are no short-cuts. Just as we first responded to the call of the Holy Spirit who gave us eyes to see our need for Jesus Christ's offer of redemption by faith, we must daily respond by faith to His call to be holy as we submit to the power of the Spirit.

God uses the circumstances of our lives to conform us into Christ's image. Such circumstances can either cause doubt and sorrow or we can grow in Christ through such events and use them as an opportunity to exercise our faith to His glory.

We need the kind of faith that trusts that God does in fact work all things together for our good. And if our faith is weak in that area we need to come to God and seek Him and His power to enable us to rest in such promises. He will come through for us because it is His delight that we grow in Christ. But He also provides the means for such growth.

Dave Hunt makes the comment: "The fruit of faith is not necessarily the deliverance or blessing one prefers, but the igniting

of such love for God that one's greatest joy becomes obedience to His will no matter what the consequence."

May we surrender and see Christ's life in us to His glory and our good. And may we always consider how we may go out into all the world and make disciples of Jesus Christ, so that they too may know Christ and have the hope of being part of the family of God.

Again, don't ever forget the promise from God when you're tempted to wonder if God is still at work in your life.

Phi 1:6 "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

And so my prayer for all of us is the same prayer the writer of Hebrews had for his listeners.

Heb 13:20 -21 "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, 21 equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.