

Parson to Person

ROMANS 8 PART 8

“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. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:28–30 NKJV).

Predestination has been and continues to be a hotly debated topic among Christians. Believers form into subtle and not so subtle variations of at least one or two groups. On the one hand are those who believe that God, by His sovereign will, has, by the act of predestination, indiscriminately chosen to save some men and women from the entire population of unworthy sinners, leaving the remainder of mankind to suffer the damnation rightly deserved by all. On the other hand are those who believe that God has offered salvation to all; yet a great majority of those who could believe refuse the free offer of salvation, thus forfeiting the redemption He offers them and thereby the destination predetermined in Christ. For now, the debate continues.

The Bible does teach the doctrine of predestination. It should be accepted among those in the body of Christ—especially because believers are the recipients. Believers will find genuine rest in Christ when they understand that it is the same God who inspired the Scriptures, predestinates the believer, and therefore completes the climactic work of redemption in every born again person. He alone initiates the relationship we have in Christ, completes the work of justification, sanctification, and glorification, thus providing the believer all they need in this life and in the life to come.

Please do notice in the verses above that the God who cannot learn both foreknew us and predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. In this passage, the predestination is *to* conformity to the image of the Son of God—Jesus. This is the joy of every believer. God has purposed in Himself to make us like Jesus. As we respond to His leadership, we grow in grace and, therefore, grow to be more and more like Him. Although we will not fully realize this complete transformation in this temporal life, the final result is that we will—when the redemption we have in Christ has come to its fullest fruition. This will occur when we see the Lord face to face. We are told, *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2).

Furthermore, please also notice that predestination is linked to the foreknowledge of God, for those He foreknew, He called, justified, and glorified. The interesting thing is that all three verbs are in the aorist tense, active voice, and indicative mood. This means that the action stated by the verbs—called, justified, and glorified—is in the condition described. This means that the state the believer is in has been accomplished, and that the condition of the believer is not potential, or probable, but actual! Therefore, we conclude that, in the eternal foreknowledge of God, the condition of the believer has been complete—in Christ—from before the foundation of the world as actual, outside of time, before time began! For this reason Paul said that God *“chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). This alone should prove that the perspective of God is eternal and thus outside of time. The finished work occurred prior to the beginning of time and, therefore, even before our birth. Moreover, predestination and foreknowledge as viewed from outside the time continuum does not discount time itself, and thus time, and the activities that occur in time, must be recognized in order for man to comprehend it and to remain consistent with those passages that address the salvation process from the perspective of man. This alone should put to rest the fact that predestination is inseparable from the foreknowledge of God, and also the fact that mankind is not excluded from the process—within the time continuum.

The declaration of activity here in Romans 8—explains the salvation experience from the perspective of God alone. It does not recognize any involvement from man. However, man is involved in one way—in one way alone: the exercise of faith in the time continuum. While this may not be recognized within this passage, it is nonetheless true and must be included in order to complete the picture. Therefore, it could be suggested (and with your permission) that the verse, when listing both the activity of God from outside of time and the activity of man as included in time, might be modified in summary to read something like this: *“For whom He foreknew [from*

outside of time and before the creation of the world—because He cannot learn and does not trick Himself into not knowing], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren [which was according to His divine prerogative, sovereign purpose and good pleasure]. Moreover [the foreknown] whom He predestined [by marking off and predetermining the end and climactic result], these He also called [by His grace and power, as manifested by His great love]; whom He called [within the time continuum, responded by grace through faith and believed the gospel], these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also [as the result of His eternal, present, and future work in the believer, are therefore destined to be] glorified.” (Romans 8:28–30 NKJV). (Forgiveness requested for the additions but without need of apology as the facts are biblically all consistent.)

It is well known by the majority of Theologians that faith is a gift and that the power to exercise that faith is likewise provided men by God. Moreover, it is understood that one must believe in order to be saved and that salvation follows faith—not the other way around. For this reason, Paul wrote, *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”* (Ephesians 1:13 NKJV).

Therefore, inasmuch as Romans 8 declares the work of God from the one-sided view of His work alone, Paul also describes the response of man, as foreknown by God, from the other side as described within the time continuum by declaring that these Ephesians trusted Christ for salvation after they heard and that they were sealed by the Holy Spirit after they believed—thus communicating the view of things as seen from man’s perspective. This fact (just like the other) is consistent throughout the Scriptures. (Examples include 1) Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness, 2) whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, and 3) believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, etc.) Faith precedes salvation—in the time continuum. Thus, the call God made—as determined before time—God made known to man in the time continuum—and men therefore responded in the time continuum—where they were indeed saved—for time and eternity.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul