

Rom 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Rom 8:30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

As some of you realize, we normally follow the Scripture choices in the revised common lectionary. We are departing from the lectionary this morning to begin a six week series on Romans 8:29-30.

Here the Apostle Paul reveals to us God's plan for the redemption of His people. Paul uses five verbs in this passage that show us God's plan from before the foundation of the world until the glorification of the saints. These five words are put together like links in an unbreakable chain. No one is lost from the first step to the last step. Every person who is in view in the first step makes it all the way to the last step. This chain illustrates our eternal security in Christ. This is no ordinary chain. It is supernaturally strong because every link is forged by God Himself. There is great comfort to be found here.

Here is the heart of the passage.

Those whom God foreknew he predestined, and those He predestined He called, and those He called He justified, and those He justified He glorified.

So the five steps are: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification.

We are going to take a look at each of these words over the next several weeks to get an idea of the salvation process from God's point of view. Then we will take a week to look at it from man's point of view. In other words, if God does all this, and He does, then what about faith? And we will consider all these ideas in light of the gospel which ties them all together.

First I want you to know that there is a difference between what saved people need to understand and what unsaved people need to understand. Let me explain. Unsaved people need to know one thing. They need to know that they are sinners who deserve to go to hell but God in His love and mercy has sent His own Son Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for their sin by dying on the cross in accordance with the Scriptures, being buried, and being raised from the dead in accordance with the Scriptures. And that if they accept the payment that Jesus made on their behalf, their sin is forgiven and they can begin a new relationship with God called eternal life. Whosoever will come has life.

OK? Then those who come can learn and marvel that they were expected all along. I give you this caution because it is not a good idea to go up to an unbeliever and say something like - too bad God didn't pick you, eh?

Saved people on the other hand have been reconciled with God and are in the process of becoming like God's Son. That process is called sanctification and what it really means is that since God loves us so much that He died for us, we in turn love Him so much that we want to know Him better. We want to understand His will and His ways so that we can please Him with our lives. If you are saved, you will want to know your Savior better. And the way that starts is by understanding His nature, His character, and His purpose for us. And of course we learn about Him from His word, the Bible.

And we can learn an awful lot about God from these verses that we are considering. The first word that we are considering is foreknowledge.

Verse 29 tells us: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined."

It all starts with the foreknowledge of God. What is foreknowledge? The verb means to know beforehand. To know beforehand. In the context of this passage the object of the verb is the word those. Those whom God foreknew. So this is about the people whom God foreknew but not just in the sense of knowing who they are. Obviously God knows who everyone is. These are the people whom God is going to predestine, call, justify, and glorify. These are God's elect. These are Jesus' sheep. Jesus said in John 10:14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know

me. So when it says that God foreknew these people, or knew these people beforehand it is talking about the same thing as Jesus saying, I know my own.

Did you know there is a list kept in heaven of those whom God foreknew? There is a list. It is called the Lamb's Book of Life, Jesus of course being the Lamb of God. In the Lamb's Book of Life are the names of all the people who belong to God. And a very interesting thing about this book is that it was written before the foundation of the world.

In Revelation 13 we learn about the beast who is the Antichrist, or the coming world leader. What we learn is that the people who are on earth at that time will either worship the beast or worship the Lord. By the way, that is true today as well. People either worship the Son of God or they worship the beast in one of his many forms of deception. Revelation 13:8 says that everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain will worship the beast.

In other words, God wrote the names of all the people whom He will save in a book before the foundation of the world. Before He created the world, before He created Adam and Eve, before anyone was born, God already knew every person that He was going to save.

That will get the little wheels turning in our heads won't it?

Rev 17:8 says it again. "... the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast..."

Rev 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Jesus said in Mat 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

Eph 1:4 says that God "... chose us in him before the foundation of the world..."

Peter addressed his first letter to “those who are elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”

Speaking of the great tribulation Jesus said

Mar 13:20 And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

The elect whom He chose. Those whom God foreknew are His elect. His chosen. And He chose them before the foundation of the world. And He chose them according to His purpose - not because of any merit in them.

Jesus said to the disciples,

Joh 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you.

Listen. If you follow the words chose, chosen, choose, choice, and so on through the Bible you will find that every single time that it has to do with salvation it is God who does the choosing. Not us. God initiates it all and God sees it all through.

Ephesians 2:8 says that our faith is not our own doing, it is the gift of God.

Philippians 1:29 says that it has been granted to us to believe in Christ.

Act 11:18 says God even grants the repentance that leads to life.

So when you read about those whom God foreknew, rest assured that God chose those people for His purposes according to His good pleasure. There was no human merit involved whatsoever and God did the choosing before He formed the world.

So we run headlong into the Sovereignty of God. And immediately our little porcupine bristles come out and we shout, wait a minute, that's not fair! Who do you think you are, God? Yep. Well, who made you God. I AM.

Well what about free will? What about it? God gave us free will all right and you know what we did with it? We caused the fall of creation. We disobeyed God. We rebelled against God. We sinned against God and our sin brought death and sickness and evil into God's creation. We

corrupted what God made. That's what we did with the free will that God gave us and because we did that, our will is no longer free but it is in bondage to sin and Satan. And because our will is corrupted we will never choose God on our own.

But here is the good news. God chose to save some. We all chose sin and death but God chose to give His people whom He chose for His reasons life instead.

Well, how does He choose? I have no idea. Why did He choose me? I really have no idea.

Paul writes in Romans 9 that God has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. And he anticipates the question that someone will ask. He writes,

Rom 9:19 You will say to me then, "Why does God still find fault? For who can resist his will?"

Yeah. That's right. Who can resist His will? And Paul answers,

Rom 9:20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"

Rom 9:21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?

Rom 9:22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

Rom 9:23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory--

Rom 9:24 even us whom he has called...

Folks, God is sovereign and He sovereignly controls all things. And let me tell you something. I am so glad that it's true. Listen. If there was one molecule that was outside of God's control then His promises would be worthless. And all those people who keep telling you that God is a gentleman who would never make you do anything against your will are just plain silly. Listen. If God did not choose to change the hearts of His elect then no one would choose God. Not because God is stopping us from choosing Him, but because we won't do it. And if God does change your heart you will choose God, not because He stops you from rejecting Him but because you won't reject Him.

Do you really think that God has to have our permission to act? Think about that. That is the silliest thing I ever heard. If God needs my permission to do something then He is not God, I am.

Don't be so silly.

Yeah, but... But what? Do you think there is some decision that you are more qualified to make than God is? Do you? Really?

Well then how can I know if I am chosen? That's easy. Do you believe the gospel? If you do then you were chosen by God before the foundation of the world.

Well aren't there some people whom God has chosen who won't be saved? Nope. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined and those He predestined He also called and those He called He also justified and those He justified He also glorified.

Every single person that God foreknows will choose Him. And every single person that God does not foreknow will not choose Him.

Isaiah sums up God's sovereign foreknowledge nicely.

Isa 46:9 ... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'

God is sovereign but He is also perfectly holy, perfectly just, perfectly loving, perfectly merciful, and perfectly graceful. God is all knowing, all seeing, all powerful, always present, and always existing. And He's really smart too. I think He is just a little bit more qualified to choose correctly than I am with my little peanut sized brain that has been saturated in the corruption of sin. He's God. And remember this. Nothing that God does will ever go against who God is. God is love. Therefore His choices are loving. God is just and so are His decrees. God is holy and He hates all sin. God is merciful and He withholds His righteous wrath until His justice requires its release. God is also graceful and forgiving. His decisions will never compromise His character.

So we can trust God. And it doesn't matter if our finite minds cannot resolve everything in God's word. We can trust God. Praise His glorious Name!