

Last week we began a six week series based on Romans 8:29-30. You heard those verses in our first reading this morning. The central idea is that those whom God foreknew He also predestined, and those He predestined He called, and those He called He justified, and those He justified He also glorified.

Last week we took the tiniest peek at God's foreknowledge. Countless volumes have been written on that topic and we have barely formulated the idea but we will plow on nonetheless. Simply put, God chose His own people, the people known in the Bible as the elect, before the foundation of the world. In fact He wrote their names in a book before the foundation of the world. And I know that this makes a lot of people a little twitchy. But the Bible teaches it just the same.

When I encounter such ideas in the Bible I try not to quarrel with God. Instead I assume that the problem with the passage lies with my feeble understanding. I pray for revelation. And I go on. So let's go on.

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.

The group of people foreknown in the first link of this unbreakable chain is the same group of people that will be carried to the end. That is to say that every single person that God foreknew in the sense of this verse will be carried through to the last step which is glorification.

So the hard part is over. You can wrestle with the idea of God's sovereign election on your own time. I will take the coward's way out and simply move on to look at what else God has in store for His elect.

Today we consider the idea of predestination. And we can all avoid a lot of headaches if we look at what we are predestined to. The verse says that the elect are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son so that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God wants us to become like Jesus. It is our destiny. And it is a lofty destiny indeed, one that I would not have dared to consider if God had not said it first. After all, there is a being who got himself into big trouble by saying that he would be like God. We know him as Satan. So let's establish right from the start that we are not talking about

becoming gods as some cults assert, or even becoming god-like. We are talking about becoming more like Jesus the perfect man. The topic of predestination is already big enough without attempting to reconcile how Jesus can be all God and all man so we will simply have to accept it and move on.

God has predestined His elect to be conformed to the image of His Son so that Jesus might be the firstborn of many brothers and sisters.

I want to take a look at a passage that sheds some light on this idea. Please open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter one. Ephesians chapter one beginning with verse 3. If you are using a pew Bible it starts on page 1817.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

Eph 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

Eph 1:5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Eph 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Eph 1:8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

Eph 1:9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

Eph 1:10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Eph 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Eph 1:12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

The word predestined only occurs five times in the Bible. Twice here, twice in our passage in Romans, and once in Acts 4:28 where we learn that Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever God's hand and God's plan had predestined to take place. In other words the

crucifixion of our Lord was predestined to take place exactly as it did. God planned from the beginning not only to create but to redeem and that plan always included the death of Christ on the cross.

It is interesting to note that all four of the other occurrences of the word predestined have to do with the people who are reconciled to God through Christ's actions at that cross. We are predestined in Christ who was predestined to die for us. Our destiny is to live in Christ. His destiny was to die for us and to defeat death for us so that we can live in Him. What a destiny that is.

In this passage in Ephesians we get a hint of what it means to be chosen in God. Paul writes that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

If you want to resonate with the right tone of thanksgiving when confronted with God's sovereign election then realize that it is the greatest blessing possible to be blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world. If someone hands you a million dollars are you going to complain because they did not consult you in advance of offering the gift? Let me tell you. The spiritual blessings of God in Christ Jesus are worth more than all the money in the world. How dare we be indignant at the idea of God choosing?

And we need to keep working on our attitudes because when we read that what God chose us for is to be holy and blameless before Him we don't tend to jump for joy at the thought. In fact I think that to most of us the idea of being holy and blameless before God does not sound like a lot of fun. It sounds like a lot of work that will take a lot of effort and that it may conflict with some of the ways that we choose to use our time now.

But as we begin to understand the thrill of being pleasing in the sight of God, our attitudes will change.

Have you ever seen a little puppy absolutely shivering and squirming with delight just to be in your presence? The puppy does not only wag its little tail, it wags its whole body and the puppy puts everything it's got into demonstrating to you that all it wants is to please you. All it

wants in the world is to have your attention and to feel your reassuring pat on the head.

That is what we should feel like before God. We have a different part of puppyhood down pretty well. That is we sulk and whine and tear the place up when we don't feel the presence of our master. But the difference between us and a puppy is that God designed us to be aware of His presence all the time. He predestined us to be in Him and He in us. He sealed us with His Holy Spirit who literally dwells within us so that we never need to be alone. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing and that blessing never ceases to fall on us even though we frequently choose to put up our spiritual umbrellas to block the flow. And it is all blessing upon blessing that God pours on us.

Proverbs 10:22 The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

Let's take a look at some of the blessings that the elect are predestined to receive.

In love, Ephesians 1:5 says,
Eph 1:5 God predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

We are predestined for adoption through Jesus Christ. This is the idea we saw back in Romans where it said that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We are adopted into God's family as brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 11 says that we have obtained an inheritance in Christ. It is because we are adopted sons and daughters of God that we inherit with Jesus. And what an inheritance it is! We will talk more about that inheritance when we get to glorification in a few weeks. For now suffice it to say that Peter calls our inheritance (1Pe 1:4) imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. He says that it is kept in heaven for us who are being guarded by God's power until that time is reached. Hebrews 9:15 says it is an eternal inheritance. Paul says that part of the inheritance is the redemption of our bodies. Our souls have already been redeemed and we have eternal life now, but our bodies

are still mortal and we wait for the adoption ceremony when our mortal bodies will be traded for immortal.

Heb 1:2 says that "in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things."

And Paul says in Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Rom 8:17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.. and in

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

What an inheritance it will be! And it is ours who are predestined to adoption as sons and daughters of God.

Does anyone here still want to complain about being predestined?

But that adoption with its inheritance is only one of the things we are predestined to.

The same plan and purpose of God that predestined Christ to go to the cross, that predestines us to adoption, is the same plan and purpose of God set forth in Christ to unite all things in him. Our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ is what reveals to us the mystery of the ages, the mystery of God's will which is to unite all things in Him. It is all part of the timeless eternal plan of God to unite us in Christ through the redeeming power of his blood. And He does it all by lavishing His grace upon us. Oh mercy.

There is one more thing we are predestined to in this Ephesians passage. Verses 11 and 12 say that

Eph 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Eph 1:12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

We have been predestined according to God's purpose which is that we who hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory. You see when God chose us to be conformed to the image of His Son He chose

us to be examples of His great grace so that all of creation would praise His glory. God demonstrates his great love in that (Rom 5:8) while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The very fact of our hope in Christ is testimony to the great love of God so that we would bring praise to His glory. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote these words to Timothy.

1Ti 1:15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1Ti 1:16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

1Ti 1:17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul is saying that the mercy that he, the chief of sinners, received is an example of Christ's perfect patience and seeing it we should give glory to the King of ages.

Peter wrote,

1Pe 3:15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;

The very hope that is in us is praise to God's glory.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is quite a destiny that we have. And it was set in the mind of God before he even formed the world.

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!