

We are in the 3rd week of a 6 week series based on Romans 8:29-30. By now those verses ought to be starting to sound familiar to you. 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 looked at predestination as it is used in this passage. We noted that the same people who were foreknown in the first link of this chain were also predestined to become more like Jesus. Today we see that the same people who were foreknown and predestined are also called. God chose or foreknew His own people according to His own purposes for His own reasons and then He predestined this group of people known in the Bible as the elect, to be conformed to the image of Christ.

It is interesting to note that God both foreknew and predestined His elect before the foundation of the world. Today we reach the center link of this chain and we cross from the mysterious time before time into the time domain that we all inhabit. It is also interesting to note that this step of calling is something that God does on a very personal and individual level. Since none of us were born yet, it does not really matter whether God foreknew us all at once. And since we share a common destiny, that is to be more like Christ, we all could have been predestined at once. But now we come to the call. God both foreknew us and predestined us before we were born, but He calls us during our lifetime. There are several things about this call that need to be understood. First, let's not forget the context of the call. It goes out specifically to those whom God foreknew and predestined. Furthermore, those who are called will be justified and glorified. In other words the call that is in view here is a call that only goes out to the elect and 100% of those being called will answer.

Immediately then we see that this is NOT a general call that goes out to all the world. We see this because literally the whole world for generation after generation has heard the call of God in Christ but relatively few have answered it. Since everyone who receives this call does answer it, it is not a general call.

By the same reasoning, this call is irresistible. Since every person receiving this call gets justified, and justification is by faith, then every person who receives this call responds to it in faith that leads to

justification. No one who receives this call turns it down.

Some of the confusion surrounding this idea comes from the different types of calls in the Bible. For example Abram was called to leave his home and his country. Joseph was called to see his family through a famine. Jonah was called to preach to Nineveh. John the Baptist was called to introduce the Christ. Paul was called to be an Apostle. Judas was called to betray Jesus. There are many types of calls but in our Romans passage we are concerned with the call to saving faith.

One of the passages that causes some confusion in this regard is Mat 22:14 which says, "... many are called, but few are chosen."

That verse is at the end of our Lord's parable comparing the kingdom of heaven to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. Those first invited would not come. So the king opened up the invitation to others. Finally the feast came and there was a man there who was not wearing the wedding garment and he was thrown out. And then we come to the verse that says, "many are called but few are chosen."

The first call was to the Jews. The second was to the Gentiles. But in the end, only those who are chosen by the king are allowed in. When you compare this idea with our passage in Romans we can quickly see that the calls that went out in this parable are very different. First, these calls went out to everyone the king's men could find. Second, the calls are obviously resistible as many refuse them. Third, not all who were called were justified, but only those who were chosen.

In our Romans passage the call is very specific. It goes out to those who were foreknown and predestined. In Romans the call is irresistible because everyone who is called answers in faith. And in Romans all who were called were previously chosen. What we see by comparing these two passages is that Christ's death provided more than enough payment for everyone to be redeemed but only God's elect will put on the provided garment of salvation.

There are several passages that do illustrate the effectual call that we are talking about. One is in John chapter 6 beginning in verse 35.

Joh 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Joh 6:36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not

believe.

Joh 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

Let's pull the logical premises out of this text.

Jesus said, whoever comes and believes shall never hunger or thirst. All through the new testament, coming to Christ means coming to Him with faith. It means that we come believing. It is not enough to simply show up as we will see here.

So Jesus says, whoever believes will never thirst. Then in verse 36 he says, but you have seen Him - that is you have seen the evidence that He is the Christ - yet you don't believe. And then He says All that the Father gives me will come to me. So it goes like this.

Whoever comes to me believing will never hunger or thirst.

You don't believe.

All the Father gives to me will come to me believing.

Conclusion: the Father did not give you to me.

And in case you think I am only seeing what I want to see, in verse 44 Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

You can also tell that Jesus is talking about God's effectual and irresistible call because Jesus says in verses 37, 39, 40, 44, 47, 51, 54, and 58 that each and every person whom the Father sends will not only come but will be preserved by Jesus and raised on the last day.

What happened next is that Jesus talked some more about eating his flesh and drinking His blood and a lot of the people who had been following Him were not happy about it. They did not understand what He was saying because they did not believe that He was the Son of God. Skipping down to verse 63 Jesus said,

Joh 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Joh 6:64 But there are some of you who do not believe."...

Joh 6:65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to

me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Joh 6:66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

So we see again the effectual call of God. And again the call involves belief. Jesus says some of you do not believe. Coming to me in belief can only be granted by the Father. And many turned back and no longer walked with him.

Three times in this passage Jesus combined these ideas. in verses 36 and 37 he says,

you do not believe.

All that the Father gives me will come to me believing.

conclusion: you do not believe because the Father did not give you to me.

In verses 40 and 44 Jesus says,

Everyone who believes has eternal life.

No one can come to me believing unless the Father draws him.

Conclusion: I can tell the Father has drawn you because you believe.

and in verses 64 and 65 Jesus says,

Some of you do not believe.

No one can come to me believing unless it is granted him by the Father.

Conclusion: Belief is granted by the Father.

So we see that the Father grants belief to His chosen and the Father gives His chosen to Jesus. And all who are drawn to Jesus by the Father will come to Him believing and will have eternal life.

Those who are foreknown and predestined are then granted, given and drawn. This is the calling of God in Romans.

When God's elect are called they come to Jesus in faith and then they are justified.

Another passage that illustrates this nicely is the story of the raising of

Lazarus from the dead. You know the story. Lazarus died. Jesus went to his sisters, Mary and Martha. And Jesus said, Joh 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

And they took Jesus to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." And they did. And then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." And Lazarus who had been dead four days came out alive.

This is a great illustration of the irresistible call of God. Lazarus was dead. He was not seeking Jesus. He was dead. And Jesus called him and called him specifically. He said, Lazarus come out. And he did.

It was a specific call to a chosen person who was dead and he came to Jesus in faith and lived.

As Jesus so often does, he gives us a physical example of what happens to us spiritually. Compare this to the teaching in Ephesians 2.

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

Eph 2:5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

Just as Lazarus was physically dead when Jesus called him, we were spiritually dead when God called us.

Jesus made Lazarus physically alive. God made us spiritually alive. Lazarus could do nothing about his condition. He was physically dead. We could do nothing about our condition. We were spiritually dead. Just as Lazarus was regenerated to physical life when God called, We are regenerated to spiritual life When God calls. We must be called to spiritual life from our spiritual death. And it is God the Father who does the calling. It is God the Son who paid the price of redemption. It is God the Holy Spirit who does the regenerating.

And every spiritually dead person whom God calls is regenerated by the Holy Spirit and responds in faith to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you see how boasting is excluded? None of us can claim anything over anyone else. We were all spiritually dead. Faith is not a work of man it is a gift from God. Receiving that faith is not a work of man it is granted by the Father. We were all children of wrath. But God chose to make some of us alive for His own purpose. He called us out of death and made us alive in Christ.

There is one more thing I want to point out. There is a difference between being elect and being saved. Remember that the call comes at some point in our lives. Up until that point, if we were to die, we would die in our sins and go to hell. But God has even made provision to make sure that never happens.

In Hebrews chapter one there is a discussion about the supremacy of Christ. And the discussion turns to the angels to show that Christ is even higher than they. And the author of Hebrews takes the trouble to tell us a few things about angels. And in the last verse of chapter one it says of angels,

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

The Contemporary English Version of the Bible says,
Angels are merely spirits sent to serve people who are going to be saved.

In other words, God has provided guardian angels to insure that His elect live to hear his effectual call.

Let me tell you a story of an angelic miracle that Donna and I experienced. We were one of three couples in a minivan going out to a ballroom to dance. Donna and I, and our friends Nick and Mary Ann all had a saving relationship with the Lord. Our friend Ross who was driving did not and his wife was on the fence. And it was something that we talked about regularly. So Ross is driving and we are going down this two lane country road and it was really a dark night. And at the same instant we all realized that right in front of us was some kind of farm machinery with no lights, no reflectors, no nothing and it was big and we were coming up on it impossibly fast. And Ross kind of screamed and yanked the wheel to the left only to find a pair of oncoming headlights impossibly close to us. And the next thing we

knew, we were in front of the farm machine and we did not hit either it or the oncoming vehicle and I am telling you, it was not just a close call. It was impossible. And we all sat in that van for a while in stunned silence. And when Ross could speak, he said, "I am sure lucky that you guys were in the car."

And I said to him, "no, you have it backwards. We know where we are going when we die. You don't. We are alive because you are in the car and God is not done with you."

Now I have not talked to Ross in a long time but I believe that he is in that interesting position of being elect but unsaved.

I believe that God has a prearranged relationship with Ross and that he is predestined to adoption in God's family and that one day, he is going to receive the irresistible call of God and the Holy Spirit is going to regenerate him and he is going to come to Christ in faith and be saved. And until that day, the angels will preserve him.

And it's is all in the hands of God.