

Sermon Title: “**Gospel Triumphant: Foreknown and Predestined**”

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

Text: Romans 8:26-30

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -Luke 21:19

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. **Standing Firm** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an **upward, consistent, contagious, and outward** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. A Shared Groaning (Romans 8:22-28)

*“For we know that **the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly** as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.** And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” **-Romans 8:22-28***

Groaning. The Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel, comes in answer to our groanings. Before unfolding truths that would affirm God’s faithfulness amidst His Creation- as well as each and every believer to be found by faith in Jesus- Paul appeals to the Jewish audience to recognize this unifying *groan*. Whether Jew or Gentile, this groaning connects the Creation with those Created in God’s Image to the ultimate Image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is a shared groaning.

- 1) *The whole creation **groaning** together.* **Groaning** here in the Greek means that each individually part feels the common calamity- there is no part of creation untouched by the calamity of sin and thus cries out in a unified, *together*, **groan**.
- 2) *We ourselves, who have the Firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan** inwardly.* **Groaning** here, like the creation, starts to have a distinct voice. It is here, through you and I, that God hears the cries of His children amidst the sea of groaning. *Like being in a crowd of noise, a parent can hear the unique cry of their child.* Unlike the creation around us, humanity in Christ have tasted of the promises of God and know what awaits us. Like a tree in Spring that begins to bud with fruit promising a soon harvest, the Resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit are the Firstfruits of what is to come when all every last child given to the Son by the Father come to Him in faith.
- 3) *The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with **groanings** too deep for words.* Groaning here is special, unique, intimate. It is paired here with intercession on our behalf due to our weakness. **Weakness** is the physical experience- emotional, spiritual, physical wounds that sin brings to us. It is loss, it is pain, it is disease, suffering- even though we are promised eternity with Christ, here we have hope within a body that is slowly dying. Each of us experiences pain and suffering unique to our circumstances. While we share in the groaning of all creation under sin, each of our voices crying out is heard by God through His Spirit.

Please understand, dear Saint, God has placed His Spirit within you to bring your cries to Him, because He cares for you. He has chosen you to the adoption into His family as a son and daughter (more on this soon). **Groaning** here, in this context of the Spirit’s intercession, is used of Stephen as he proclaimed God’s truth before his stoning,

*“I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.” **-Acts 7:34***

The groaning that the Spirit does from within us is that which brings response from God the Father through the Son. This is how each and every promise of God is Yes and Amen to you and me who have placed faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul is building into the groaning happening within his Jewish brethren who have returned to Rome after being expelled, only to find their church has changed. Gentiles now dominate the attendance charts and they are doing things differently than how they did it before. This change does not mean that the Jews are outside of God's plans, nor that their history is meaningless.

Whether Jew or Gentile, we each share in the groaning of all Creation under sin. And for those in the Body of Christ in Rome, both Jew and Gentile have received God's Spirit because He has chosen to hear their groaning. Further, it is the Spirit who not only translates the groaning within each of us, bringing our minds to the Father, but is also bringing the mind of the Father to us in order to embrace His Will being done as His Kingdom is coming.

II. A Shared Tragedy (Romans 9:6-8)

“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.”

-Romans 9:6-8

Not all who are descended from Abraham are a part of the blessing given to what would become the Nation of Israel. Further, even those born through Isaac, the child of promise, are not guaranteed to be a part of the promise God made with Abraham. There is no “in” with God outside of faith in Christ- whether it was the shadow of Christ through the sacrifice of Atonement in the Old Testament, or the Person and Work of Christ in the New Testament. None of us can inherit the faith of our parents or pastor anymore than those born Jewish inherited the faith Abraham placed in God.

A. The Role of Faith and Obedience in Israel (Jeremiah 52)

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of the Lord it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. 5 So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 7 Then a

breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled and went out from the city by night by the way of a gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him. The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and also slaughtered all the officials of Judah at Riblah. He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and the king of Babylon took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Lord, and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down all the walls around Jerusalem. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive some of the poorest of the people and the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the artisans. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

-Jeremiah 52:1-16

Despite God's appeals through various prophets including Jeremiah, many remained stubborn in their attitude toward God and Babylon. The Nation of Israel long abandoned God and were not living by the faith Abraham modeled with God. Their heart was far away from God in their worship and daily life. As a result, God was sending them far away from His Presence in the Temple and the Land of Promise He gave them. From Egyptian slavery He delivered them from, and to Babylonian Captivity He delivered them into.

Almost 600 years later the Jewish Nation having returned to Jerusalem and experienced their Temple rebuilt to its largest representation yet under Herod are about to experience the same thing happen again. This time due to their rejection of Jesus as God's Son and their Messiah and rightful King. This time under the militant might of Rome.

*“And when he (Jesus) drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” **-Luke 19:41-44***

Remember, Paul wrote the letter to the Roman Believers around AD 56, 14 years before Jerusalem and the Temple would again experience such a fate under the Roman Empire. Yet despite the National rejection of Jesus, there were those—a remnant—who did not reject but in fact received Jesus as their Messiah and placed faith in His Person and Work for Atonement (Salvation).

This builds further into Paul's argument that outside of Faith there is no "in" with God.

*"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." **-Romans 8:5-10***

B. The role of Faith and Obedience among the Gentiles (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

*"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." **-2 Timothy 4:3-4***

Even though it may seem that the Gentile population is increasing to a degree that they are dominating the Body of Christ, they are still held to the same measure of faith- the faith that Abraham placed in God's word that shadowed into the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Yet, as Israel got to a place where faith was an empty religious expression, so will the Church in the days before Jesus Returns. Gentiles, like the Jews, have no more of an "in" with God than anyone else. If there is not obedient faith in Jesus, there is no relationship with Jesus. (At least I struggle to see anywhere in Scripture where I can preach otherwise).

*"So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." **-Revelation 3:16***

*III. **Our God Who Demonstrates Foreknowledge (Romans 9:30-33)***

*"What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." **-Romans 9:30-33***

Israel's rejection of Jesus as their Messiah was predicted by God through the Prophets, here in particular the prophet Isaiah. *Why is this significant?* Because God foretold it would happen; and it did. Israel's experience with God is illustrating the truths of the Gospel and its ultimate triumph in our world. How is the Gospel Triumphant? It begins with God and His foreknowledge.

God **foreknew** Israel's captivity in and deliverance from Egypt.

"As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be

*afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” -**Genesis 15:12-16***

God **foreknew** Israel’s captivity in and deliverance from Babylon.

“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words, behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”

-Jeremiah 25:8-14

God **foreknew** Israel’s Rejection of the Messiah, destruction of Jerusalem, dispersion into all the world, the inclusion of Gentiles into the Body of Christ, and the ultimate repentance and restoration of National Israel.

*“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.” -**Romans 11:7-8***

*“So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!” -**Romans 11:11-12***

The Gospel is Triumphant because God foreknew all that would take place before He spoke into existence all that He created. Even sin, evil, the devil and his demonic associates all exist within the fence of God’s foreknowledge. As they exist within this fence of foreknowledge, they are leashed to accomplish no more and no less than what God determines for the Glory of His Son, Jesus. *Pharoah, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, Pilate, Antichrist-* all are subject to the God who is working all things for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Does this mean that God foresaw that all of this would happen and planned accordingly, or that He determined and allows within the framework of His eternal plan?

IV. Foreknown and Predestined (Romans 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. -Romans 8:29

Foreknew in the Greek means to not only know all things that will happen, but within the framework and flow of history choose to place His love on us (believers in Christ) in an electing fashion.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” -1 Peter 1:1-2

“He (Jesus) was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” -1 Peter 1:20-21

It is in the definition of *foreknowledge* that *predestination* is born out from. **Predestination** here in the Greek means that those God has determined to place His love upon are marked out beforehand. Just as Jesus being the means of salvation before God created and sin was even a part of the story, all of those who come to place faith in Jesus come to Him due to the Predestination of the Father.

The purpose of this election is conformity to the Image of the Son; we are redeemed to bring the Son Glory for all eternity. We will look more into the particulars of this in the weeks that follow. But for today it is important that we understand that if we are in Christ today, it is because God foreknew and predestined you to be a part of His Son. What does this mean for us today?

V. Nothing Can Separate us From God's Love (Romans 8:32-37)

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? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long, we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. -Romans 8:32-37

While we share in the grieving over a world falling apart all around us- maybe even suffering and tragedy touching our lives or those we love today, God hears our cry because He has placed His Spirit within us. Out of the sea of groaning He hears you- His son and His daughter.

The Gospel is triumphant in and through you because God, not you, is the source of it's life. Before the creation of anything that is, God determined to bring you through adoption into His

family. Everything you have done, are doing, or may do in the future that is sinful and against He who lavished His love upon you, always remember He chose you.

For those we are laboring to declare and demonstrate the Gospel into the lives of- do not loose heart over their acceptance or rejection. Remain faithful to Him; He knows those whom He has predestined. We do not and will not until we are in eternity together in Him. So, keep the witness going!

The Gospel is Triumphant because God both Foreknows and Predestines all things to see His Son Glorified. And in Christ, we will share in that eternal Glory.