

Sermon Title: **“Gospel Triumphant: Called”**

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

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Text: Romans 8:26-30 / Ephesians 1:4-5

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. Our Course Setting (Romans 8:26-30)

“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. 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. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he

called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

-Romans 8:22-28

Last week we looked at what it means to be both *foreknown* and *predestined* by God. You will remember, **foreordination** comes from the Greek verb meaning *not only to have knowledge beforehand, but also to act in accordance with this knowledge*. God seeing the impact sin would have upon His Creation birthed **predestination** which is God's *intended purpose to forelove or love beforehand*. God determined to show his love toward humanity through Christ before He spoke a word into existence through Christ (See -> Colossians 1:16).

I want to reinforce from last week this understanding- the Gospel is Triumphant because God purposed in a decision that will not change to love humanity in *infinite past* (place outside of time; without beginning). This love is that which rescues us from our own way of sin and restores us to Himself through His Son. It is here in these verses from Romans that Paul shows us that this is the plural Body, or the Church Universal, that is the chosen means and display of His foreordained purpose amidst all of Creation.

This is how we can have confidence that in Christ, all things are working toward the finale that will see Him inherit all things with us at His side as He judges sin, overseeing its removal and the restoration of all things. You and me in Christ are the Firstfruits of this to the world groaning under the burden of sin.

Yet, in this posture we stand in looking at foreordination we can feel like this is it! God has not only seen, but has also chosen and determined all things- good, evil, joys, sorrows, gains and losses. If God is truly *Sovereign* and *Omniscient*, what is the point of trying. *Let come what may!* Often this perspective leads one to a fatalistic perspective, that God has the final word so why speak up to begin with.

God is truly *Sovereign* and *Omniscient*; this Scripture affirms. Yet in this affirmation we are invited to look upon **how** God exercises these attributes. While He is all knowing and all powerful, He has established **freedom of the will** within His creation. In particular, those created in His Image (angels / demons are another sermon another day). What is the role of this freedom of the will and how does this walk alongside a God who is Omniscient and Sovereign?

I believe the answer to this lies in our **Calling**- how we respond to the Gospel invitation to turn to Christ from sin for Salvation. As we see in these verses, the Holy Spirit is very present in us all through our journey in Christ through this world. He is working to transform us into His (Jesus the Son's) Image for His Glory alone. *If Salvation can be viewed as a ship, how did we become passengers with the same Spirit filled course setting?*

II. A Chosen Ship (Ephesians 1:1-6)

“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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for

adoption to himself as sons 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.” -Ephesians 1:1-6

Where is your God and what is He doing? This is a question I face often by those I share my faith with-whether family, friends, neighbors, co-workers- any who hear my witness of God and look to the world around them as I speak. *Either God is not all powerful, or He is not all loving-* because nothing of the world as it is right now seems to affirm the Gospel. And from a certain point of view, we can understand their perspective. In and of ourselves, considering who God is, can do nothing beyond contribute to the world being what it is under sin. Knowledge of God is not being in relationship with God.

There is **Common Grace**, which is God caring for all His Creation- even those who continually reject and turn from Him.

*“The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.” -Psalm 145:9*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” -Matthew 5:43-45

If God in His Omniscient Sovereignty has predestined those who will be conformed to the Image of His Son, there must be a means by which He does this. Before we can bear witness of the good the Gospel brings, we must affirm the need for the Gospel in the first place. Because of sin we are all outside of God and moving in directions away from Him. God takes the initiative to step into our world-*our lives-* and invites us to stop moving away from Him and turn to embrace Him in forgiveness (which is repentance). This is an invitation to step into the Person and Work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Picture Jesus as a ship amidst a world where the waves carry everything away from God. Jesus is the only ship that moves against the tide and leads us back to the Father.

*“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. **The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man (Jesus) whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.**” -Acts 17:26-31*

So, if Jesus is the only ship that leads us back to the Father, and He invites us all into it, is it God who brings us into it? Do I have a choice to accept or reject? Or do both God and me have a role in entering into the ship of Christ? *How are we **chosen** in Him? Is it even important to ask and answer this question?!*

III. Election: Does God choose me or do I choose God?

*“And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” -**Romans 8:28***

Called in the Greek is an adjective that describes God’s predestination, *meaning God calls out for all to hear the invitation to come.* In context of Romans 8 this means God calls out to all of humanity to come to Salvation to His Son. In God’s *Foreknowledge* He sees and intimately knows what awaits sin- its judgment and casting out along with all those who in their freedom of will choose to reject God’s invitation through His Son.

*The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. -**2 Peter 3:9***

Herein lies the **tension** we feel (and arguably God is acquainted with through Christ toward us) as God is both Omniscient, Sovereign amidst a Creation in which He extends *free will* to His Image bearers. It is the desire for the Lord to Return now, deliver us now from sin while also realizing for God to remove sin means the removal of those we love who are presently outside of Christ. Endurance comes into play by the Spirit who groans within us in Creation that is also groaning- *How much longer, oh Lord our God?*

*“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” -**Revelation 6:9-11***

Here we are given a glimpse of those on the other side of eternity with Christ longing for this tension to find relief. Understand though their desire is not personal revenge but an end to the suffering and a longing to see Jesus fully and ultimately glorified (in which they / we will share in). All in God’s timing. There is no part of our Journey in Christ that will not require faith and trust in Him. Because He is *Omniscient* and *Sovereign*, we can keep our hand in His and trust His timing and His purposes through our circumstances.

Remember, the world is a wave under sin leading us away from God. The ship of Christ is God’s invitation to come to Him against the tide. Yet, how do we enter the ship? Is it His Work alone or shared with us? Understand clearly, we are not questioning the work of salvation for that is accomplished only, fully in Christ and is ours through faith alone (See -> *Ephesians 2:8*).

What we are looking at is our response for or against this salvation offered to us in Christ.

Called again means God is inviting- through the command to repent our trajectory is interrupted. This rules out the ability of our choosing Christ outside of His initiating the invite. (Further, see -> **Romans 3:11**) Further, Jesus said,

*“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” -**John 15:16***

Within this **calling** is the **election** of God. Those who respond to this invitation are among the *chosen or elected* to receive all of the benefits extended from the Father through the Son by the Spirit for our lives. From the moment we embrace the work of Jesus for our own we are a new creation in Him (**2 Corinthians 5:17**), sealed (**Ephesians 4:30**), and beginning to be transformed from the inside out into the adopted identity we now have in God’s family.

*“...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” -**Ephesians 1:4-5***

Chosen and elect come from the Greek word *eklektos / eklego* which means God has claimed for Himself a people whom respond to His voice and repent (turn and accept) His forgiveness and yield their life to Christ (get on the boat and go in the same Spirit filled trajectory).

*“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” -**1 Thessalonians 2:13***

Here we see the partnership (I use this term cautiously) we have in our response to God’s invitation. It is the Spirit who makes the invitation interrupt our daily lives and penetrate our heart in order to *receive* it. For those who embrace this work of the Spirit is to embrace all that God has ordained to be bestowed on those in the elect or chosen in Christ.

Even further we see this modeled in the relationship Jesus has as the Son to the Father.

*“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” -**Matthew 12:18***

*“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” -**John 10:17-18***

Modeled first by our Tri-une God we see the *Father* having chosen the *Son* to participate in the role of our Salvation with election (chosen). In this election we see the Son model obedience to the invitation of the Father. This *Spirit Filled Obedience* leads Jesus to be the sacrifice God the Father invites Him to become. Every step of the way, in relationship as the Son with the Father, Jesus says this,

*“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” **-John 4:34***

In this, I believe, we see in the Scripture the clearest and most beautiful illustration of what it means to be **Called** of God. It is to *hear* the Father’s invitation by the interrupting voice of the Spirit of God leading us to *embrace* by Faith and obey and *enter* the ship of Salvation- the Person and Work of Jesus the Son!

IV. General & Effectual- Which is it? (Matthew 22:1-14)

“And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants[a] to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

*“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.” **-Matthew 22:1-14***

Martin Luther, the German Reformer wrote a book entitled, *The bondage of the Will*. It was here that he wrestled with the question of the **general** (goes out to everyone) and the **effectual** (only God’s chosen respond positively) call of God. His resolution is mine as well, that while Adam may have had free will- to chose independently of coercion, you and me along with the rest of humanity have a will in bondage to sin. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit such chains are broken.

In this parable, those in Christ are the servants sent out to invite. We go into all the world as God’s ambassadors with His invitation- *come!*

Why is this good news to us? God energizes both the believer’s desires and actions.

“For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
-Philippians 2:13

Dear Saint- God has chosen you to your place in His Son. Invest in this calling as did the Son, to where His Will is your bread. Live for Him, labor for Him, give all for Him- and His Joy will be yours now and forever! The Gospel is Triumphant because God’s Calling will see all the elect secured in Jesus for all of eternity. From the Father to the Son.

