

Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election: What Do These Mean?

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Text: Romans 8:29-30

Romans: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Glory That Is to Be

Central Idea of Message: God knows all things in advance and predestines believers to be conformed to the image of his Son.

Introduction: Words like foreknowledge, predestination, and election have spawned many a theological debate. Perhaps some much needed light can be shed on the implications expressed by these terms through an exploration of their meanings as employed by Paul in these two verses.

I. **Foreknowledge and Predestination (v. 29)**

A. Foreknowledge and predestination do not mean the same thing, as is seen in the use of two different words

1. Προγινώσκω

a) **Foreknowledge: to know beforehand (cf. Psalm 139)**

(1) Knowing or choosing in advance to know intimately (cf. Barry, *Faithlife*, Ro 8:29)

(2) Signifies prescience (prevision), not pre-election (cf. Vincent 3:95)

(3) Means that God loved mankind before mankind loved God (cf. Moody 221)

b) With God there is no before, for all the past, present, and future are simultaneously present to him (cf. Vincent 3:95)

c) **Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?**

2. Προορίζω

a) **Predestination: to work beforehand**

b) A reference to eternity past (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 71)

(1) **While the language of time must be employed, it is quite insufficient when**

referring to God's thoughts and activities

- (2) This word, predestination, is an example of a feeble attempt at expressing the inexpressible
 - c) **Predestination is best understood as God's purposive grace which was at work before the foundation of the world (cf. MacGorman, Layman's, 71)**
- B. But what was predestined?
- 1. Not individual salvation or condemnation
 - 2. Conformity to the image of the Son of God for all who repent and believe in Christ!
 - a) Completed sanctification
 - b) This is the purpose of predestination
 - c) Conformed is transfigured (cf. Vincent 3:96)
 - d) **God did not predestine who would believe in Christ but that all who would believe would be conformed to the likeness of Jesus in all respects (cf. Vincent 3:96)**
 - (1) In character!
 - (2) In sufferings!
 - (3) In glory!
 - e) The reflection of the image of Christ in the believer is not accidental but intentional
 - f) **God predestined that his sinless Son would be the first-born of many heirs**
 - (1) First-born references the highest rank (cf. Mickelsen 1208)
 - (a) This presumes the preeminence of Christ having the unique distinction of a dignitary
 - (b) This implies the preexistence of Christ, not his creation
 - i) Uncreated, therefore eternal
 - ii) Very God of very God
 - (2) The word "first-born" suggests the great pattern established by the Great Prince (cf. Henry 6:424): first implies second
 - (3) First to die and rise from the dead never to die again (contrast with Lazarus and others who died again)
 - (4) First in priority of those never dying again
 - (a) Mankind cannot redeem mankind

- (b) Only the God-man can redeem humans
- (c) Jesus "stooped" in order to redeem mankind (Morgan 8:346)
- (5) Jesus is the "Eldest Brother" in God's family (Robertson 4:378)
- (6) **God's will for every believer is a maximum family resemblance to our "Elder Brother" (MacGorman, *Layman's*, 70)**
- 3. **Predestination is a comfortable Christian teaching provided that people accept its biblical form and not attempt to pry into it with questions which it does not set out to answer (cf. Barrett 171)**

II. **God Calls, Justifies, and Glorifies (v. 30)**

- A. Arranged as sorites (sore-righ-tees): stair-step way of relating concepts where the predicate [verb] of the first is used to form the subject of the next
- B. Called [elected]: drawn, summoned, invited
 - 1. **To be called by God is to be confronted by God (cf. MacGorman, *Layman's*, 71)**
 - 2. **God initiates contact and invites all humans into a relationship with himself**
 - 3. **God's call, or election, does not result in automatic salvation**
 - a) Example: Pharisees (John 8:44)
 - b) Grace is resistible
 - 4. **If you are human, you are created in God's image, and if you are created in God's image, you are called**
 - a) **It is not God's will that any little ones perish; every person starts out as a little one; therefore it is not God's will that any perish (Matt. 18:14)**
 - b) **God desires that all humans be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4)**
 - c) **It is not God's will that any perish, but that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)**
 - 5. Thus, all are confronted by God (Rom. 1:18-23)
- C. Justified: declared righteous
 - 1. Reference to removal of the guilt of sin
 - 2. Reference to removal of the penalty of sin
 - 3. Reference to removal of the power of sin
 - 4. Reference to bestowal of the righteousness of Christ

- D. Glorified
1. Reference to eternity future but stated in the past tense from God's perspective
 2. Reference to bestowal of a resurrection like unto that of Jesus
 3. Viewed as being as good as done!
 4. **No longer will those who repent and believe fall short of the "glory of God" (cf. Rom. 3:23)!**
- E. **God is determined to save us now from our sin and from wasting our life pursuing everything but him!**
1. God is intent on keeping us from suffering eternal torment in the Lake of Fire as we pay for our sin ourselves (cf. Mark 9:44-46; Heb. 6:2; Jude 7; Rev. 20:14-15)
 2. God, therefore, decided, in eternity past, to save all who have been elected; and all humans have been elected
 3. But there is one catch!
 - a) **One can be called and refuse to answer**
 - b) **Since calls require answers, not all are converted to God, only those who answer the call in faith (John 3:16)**
 - c) Incarnation paradigm
 - (1) Divine element: the call
 - (2) Human element: the faith response

Conclusion:

- (1) God foreknows everything.
- (2) God predestined that all who believe in his Son will be conformed to the image of his Son, and this is how true believers are identified.
- (3) God marked you and called you out for salvation.
- (4) Those whom God calls must answer, for we can refuse the destiny [path, future] which God has planned for us.
- (5) Those who answer God's call he will justify.
- (6) Those whom God justifies he promises to glorify.

Every believer, therefore, is eternally secure, not due to his or her own righteousness, but due to God's grace and power to keep his promise.

Have you answered God's call to repent of your sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? He is calling you right now. Will you answer, with faith, God's call to you today?