



## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 27



# GOD HAS PREDESTINATED

8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. <sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. – Romans 8:28-34 <sup>NKJV</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

There is a remarkable progression of thought in the book of Romans. The spiritual advancement of the brethren in Rome provided an opportunity for the Spirit to open up some of the deep things of God. Their faith had been mentioned throughout the world (1:8) – and that without the presence of any Apostle. They had a “mutual faith” that would bring advantages to the Apostle Paul himself (1:12). With strong desire he longed to be with them, knowing they would profit from his presence (1:11). The brethren in Rome had proved faithful stewards of what had been given

to them, and therefore the grace of God now brings them more. This is according to the manner of the Kingdom. As it is written, “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance” (Matt 13:12; 25:29).

Whether it is a person or a congregation, those who handle the truth of God with thankfulness and faithfulness will be given more. Paul’s Apostleship is a confirmation of that. Remarkable insights were given to him because God counted him faithful (1 Tim 1:12). How is it that such marvelous insights were

given to Paul? Hear him testify of the uniqueness of the things revealed to him. “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation **He made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), **which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in**

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. GOD IS WORKING NOW (8:28)
- II. DIVINE DETERMINATION REVEALED (8:29)
- III. THE APPOINTED PROCEDURE (8:30)
- IV. THE RESPONSE OF FAITH (8:31)
- V. THE REASONING OF FAITH (8:32)
- VI. THE CONFIDENCE OF FAITH (8:33)
- VII. EVERYTHING IS ADDRESSED (8:34)

*Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: **to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God**" (Eph 3:2-10).*

This same principle is unveiled in the book of Romans. There is a lofty pattern of thinking here that is not found in other Epistles. Because of the remarkable statements made in this book, this elevated reasoning can easily escape us—like missing the forest because of the trees. A brief overview will serve to better prepare us for the text before us.

**A BRIEF OVERVIEW  
The Gospel of Christ**

From the affirmation that the Gospel is God's power in order to the experience of salvation, the Spirit has deduced that the power of the Gospel is owing to its revelation of the righteousness of God. That righteousness is given to men upon the basis of their belief of the Gospel and faith in Jesus Christ. God is upright in conferring this righteousness upon men because of the accomplishments of His Son (1:16-18).

**Righteousness Is Needed**

Because the need for righteousness is not readily perceived, the Spirit produced extensive arguments that confirmed that all men stand in need of this righteousness (1:19-3:20). Although men lived within the consistent and powerful testimony of creation, yet not a single offspring of Adam got the message. Although some engaged in a quest for the Lord, their quest fell short of Divine intention, and they ended up serving idols. Moral degeneracy also proliferated throughout the race (1:19-32).

If any are disposed to imagine that men only needed some direction to get on the right path, the Spirit shows us this is not the case. The Jews were given the Law, which identified sin with extraordinary precision. It also declared the consequences of sin and the rewards for righteousness. Both promises and curses were unusually strong. If any vestige of spiritual ability remained in fallen man, sufficient incentive was provided to awaken that latent ability.

But this did not prove to be the case at all. The Jews, in covenant with God, ended up doing the same things as the Gentiles, who had no covenant with God. The conclusion is that *"all have sinned and [do] come short of the glory of God"* (3:23). They could not achieve righteousness without verbal direction from God. Nor, indeed, could they achieve it with such direction. All men need the righteousness announced in the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

**The Role of Faith**

With great power, the role of faith is declared in this Epistle. It is repeatedly affirmed that the righteousness given by God is appropriated by faith in men. That righteousness has now been made known in strict conformity with the testimony of the Law and Prophets. It is also realized independently of the works of the Law. In this circumstance God has excluded all human boasting. Valid boasting, or glorying, can only be in the Lord, from whom salvation in all of its glorious fullness comes (3:21-32).

**The Example of Abraham**

To assist us in laying hold of the function of faith Abraham is held before

us. God made a promise of blessing to this patriarch. The promise contradicted every form of human reasoning. There is not a law of human logic that could support what Abraham was promised. There was no possible way the promise could be fulfilled through natural means. What is more, it extended to generations after Abraham—even into eternity.

Confirming the power of faith, it is affirmed that *"Abraham believed God."* He did not stagger at the promises of God, but was *"strong in faith, giving glory to God."* As a result, God accounted, or imputed, Abraham's faith to him as righteousness. That is, he received the righteousness of God because he believed.

The record of Abraham is not for his sake alone. That is, it is not a mere historical account of the staggering accomplishments of a hero. Rather, he is an example of how God gives men His righteousness. His record is provided to assure us God will give us His righteousness if we believe the record He has given of His Son (4:1-25).

**The Practicality of Faith**

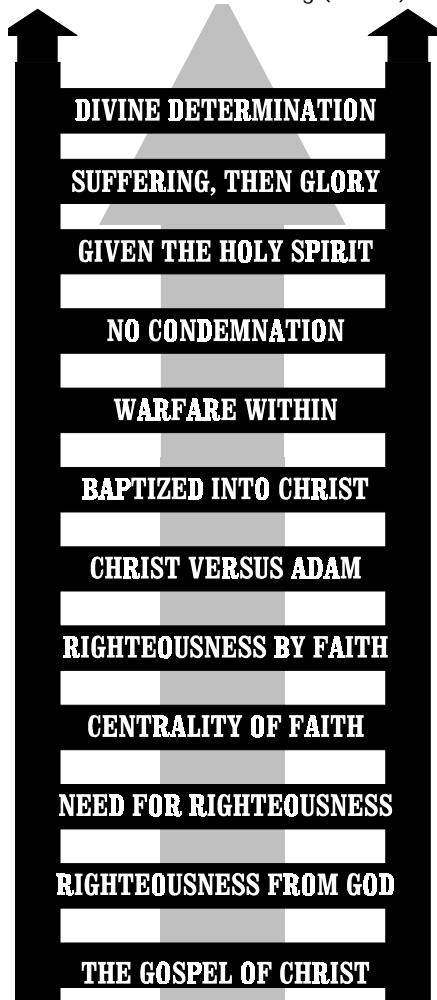
Faith is effective in the transformation of our lives. First, it brings the peace of God to us, in order that we may throw ourselves into the good fight of faith. Within the framework of that glorious peace, we come to glory in God, finding delight and great joy in His Person. The joy is so remarkable that we even glory in tribulations, aware that they are used of God to prepare us for glory.

Through faith we come into patience, or perseverance. Character is developed, which results in a dominating hope. The hope that is generated within us is so glorious, we are not ashamed of it. The love of God toward us is then shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. God's purpose is being realized in those who have received His righteousness by faith (5:1-5).

**Christ's Death Is Effective**

With great care, the Spirit refuses to allow us to glory in our growth, even though it is remarkable. Instead, He turns our attention to the death of Jesus Christ, which is the foundation for our

reception of righteousness. He confirms to our hearts that if such great things were wrought by Christ's death, much more will be accomplished through His life. There is an upward movement that characterizes God's working (5:6-11).



**Only Two Men**

The condition of all men is traced to two men – Adam and Christ. They are federal heads of their respective generations. Everyone who is under them partakes of their likeness. The attitude of God toward each of them carries forward to all who are under them.

What is even more, the effect of each man, Adam and Jesus, is traced to a single deed of each. Adam's act of disobedience, and Christ's act of righteousness. Adam's act was eating from the forbidden tree. Christ's act was laying down His life a ransom for many. The single act of both Adam and Jesus

affects everyone who is under them—“ALL.” That condition also removes all boasting (5:12-21).

**Buried Into Death**

Those who were once dead in sin, are buried by baptism into Christ's death. In that obedience they are *“buried with him by baptism into death”* –death TO sin. Their faith is to reckon, or reason, upon the reality of this experience. Those in Christ, because of their identity with Him, are *“dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.”* Consequently, they are to no longer yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness. Rather, their capabilities are to be yielded to God Himself. In Christ there is no room for willing involvement in sin, the wages of which is always *“death”* (Rom 6:1-23).

**Inner Warfare**

Faith has spawned a war within the believers. The remnants of the old nature remain in them, being indissolubly tied to their bodies. Those remnants spew forth imaginations into the thought streams of the believer, causing great frustration. Faith has made sin repulsive in all of its forms. It produces a strong longing for Divine fellowship, and enables us recognize the vanity of this world and everything associated with it.

The person who is justified does not want to contend with sin, particularly in himself. Even though weaponry is provided whereby imaginations and contradicting thoughts can be cast down, deliverance from *“the body of this death”* is longed for (7:1-25).

**No Condemnation**

The Law does not allow for the thoughts with which the believer contends. Even though they are not wanted, the Law soundly condemns the individual in whom they are found. Notwithstanding this circumstance, we have been delivered from the Law in its condemning capacity (7:4).

Within the context of fierce inner warfare, the Spirit fairly shouts to us: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.”* They are not condemned for having to contend with sin, for it is against their will. Their righteousness is not found in their

personal accomplishments, but in their faith (8:1-4).

Lest we imagine this allows for carnal, or fleshly, mindedness, we are reminded that death ALWAYS follows carnality. The mind that is not spiritual fights against God, and consequently God will fight against it (8:5-11).

**Given the Holy Spirit**

To assist us in the good fight of faith and the casting down of the expressions of the *“old man,”* God has given us the Holy Spirit. Faithfully He leads us through our faith to certain triumph over the flesh, thereby preparing us for glory.

The Holy Spirit testifies to us of our sonship, bearing witness with our spirits that *“we are the children of God”* (8:12-17). It is an effective witness.

**Suffering, Then Glory**

The sufferings endured by the believer are the appointed prelude to glory. They range from the fierce inner conflict believers endure to the oppositions of sinful men, and other matters related to being in this world. Because of the greatness of the glory that will be revealed *“in us,”* these sufferings are unworthy to be compared with it. They are a small price to pay for the privilege of reigning with Jesus.

To assist us in our suffering, we are reminded the whole creation is groaning in travail, eagerly anticipating *“the manifestation of the sons of God.”* When they are unveiled at the appearing of Jesus, the whole creation will also be released from *“the bondage of corruption.”* Redemption will effect everything just as surely as sin did!

The deep groanings of the believer extend beyond the perimeter of both human understanding and expression. For this reason, the Holy Spirit Himself comes along side of us to assist us in bearing up under the present affliction. Sufferings have a way of depleting our spiritual resources, yet we do not know how to pray about such things, for the experience itself is not fully comprehended. Thus the Spirit effectively *“makes intercession for us.”* God, who is looking for groaning souls, knows how

the Spirit thinks, and thus honors His faithful intercession for us. The outcome is that we receive what we need to survive this world and prepare for the next, even though we did not know how to pray about it (8:18-27).

Behold the progression of those thoughts. They are like the pinions of the flying eagle that mounts higher and higher, until it soars in lofty climes. If the saints of God are to survive this world,

they must learn to fly high—to reason in the Spirit, and behold things from the heavenly point of view. Low and shallow thoughts do not serve God’s purpose, even though carnal men cry out for the simplification of the things of God.

The Lord will not allow His children to grovel in the dust of simplicity. He calls them to “*come up higher*” (Rev 4:1; 11:12). As Solomon wisely said, “*For it is better that he say to you, ‘Come up here,’*

*Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince*” (Prov 25:7). Better to reason in higher realms.

Far better to soar in Romans than to crawl in hermeneutics, philosophy, and the wisdom of men. Determine in your heart to rise into the heavenlies where you have been placed in Jesus (Eph 2:6). When you are there, living by faith makes more sense, and you receive more power to do so. This is the manner of Romans.

## GOD IS WORKING NOW

<sup>8:28</sup> ***And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*** We have been presented with the complexity of spiritual life. It is being lived out in the crucible of conflict, suffering, and frustration. The matters over which we have no control are so numerous we cannot number them. It only takes a day of living by faith to confirm we are not reigning with Jesus yet. Those who boast of continual triumph have not told the truth. Either they are deceived, or they have deliberately misrepresented their circumstance—and either condition is inexcusable. Now, the Spirit will show us that the heavenly Architect is working behind the scenes. We have not been left to shift to and fro with the winds of circumstance. Eternal objectives are being worked out in us.

### WE KNOW

Faith moves one into the realm of spiritual knowledge. This is not the mere knowledge of facts, but the persuasion of reality. This is NOT the knowledge of experience (from **ginwskomen**), or experiential knowledge. This is the knowledge of faith, which is not based upon experience. Rather, it is founded upon Divine affirmation. The word used here is **oidamen**, which is used throughout Romans (3:19; 7:14; 8:22,26,28). The only way such knowledge can be possessed is by believing what the Lord has declared. We will find there is no other proof for

the reality embraced. It cannot be demonstrated in human experience or satisfactorily explained through human logic. This should become very apparent to us as the Spirit develops this thought.

### WORK TOGETHER

**Trouble and suffering, therefore, do NOT work against salvation. Rather, God works them together to accomplish the fulness of salvation.**

*“... all things work together for good . . . .”* Other versions read, “*God causes all things to work together for good,*” <sup>NASB</sup> and “*in all things God works for the good of those.*” <sup>NIV</sup> This is a high view, like viewing the earth from a distant planet. It will enable us to obtain confidence and live boldly in the world.

Trouble and suffering, therefore, do NOT work against salvation. Rather, God works them together to accomplish the fulness of salvation.

### “All Things”

The “*all things*” have to do with the conflicting experiences of life—both the

inward and outward ones. For the saints, no human experience stands on its own. It is part of a whole. It neither happens nor results in things unrelated to God’s purpose for us. Nothing is omitted, everything is included.

### “Work Together”

Things are not simply falling together by chance. They are BEING worked together by God Himself. Our experiences are the result of God weaving the tapestry of life, blending everything together like Joseph’s coat of many colors.

Behind the scenes, undetected by the human eye, but discerned by faith, God is manipulating our circumstances. He is seeing to it that everything fits together. He will work the circumstances of Moses together, so that being raised in the king’s palace, and keeping sheep on the back side of the desert will all fit together. He will take the circumstances of Joseph—being thrown in a pit, sold to Ishmaelites, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, and life in prison—and will work it all together, making one harmonious whole of it all.

Do not imagine these are only for the choice servants of God. This is the manner in which God works with all of His children. That is the point of this passage. What is more, only the Lord can cause everything to contribute to the ultimate advantage of His children—but that is precisely what He does.

**"For good"**

It is possible for everything to work together for a curse—working against the individual (Deut 2:15). This is how it is with the ungodly. Everything is actually working against them. From time to time, it may seem to the saints like this is their lot also. But this is not the case. God is working everything together for their good—their ultimate advantage.

This does not mean that every experience of life is good of itself. Rather, it is being fitted into the whole of God's purpose. In the end, everything will fit together for the advantage of the child of God. The sea and the wilderness will prove to have been advantages. The barren desert and the fruited plain will both make the child of God better, fitting him for his eternal inheritance.

Allow Joseph to come to the witness stand on this matter. Although the good was not seen from the beginning, let him tell you how the adversity to which he was subjected was *"worked together"* by the living God. He speaks to his hateful brothers, who sold him into a most grievous slavery. *"Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive"* (Gen 50:19-20).

Joseph knew this AFTER the fact. In one place, Paul knew it BEFORE the fact. It will be comforting to hear him testify. *"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ"* (Phil 1:15-19). You can see what effect the spiritual knowledge of this has upon the elect of God. I say *"spiritual knowledge"* because it is above

the ordinary knowledge of men, being driven by faith. Such knowledge does not require immediate evidence that everything is being worked together for good. A word from God will suffice to proceed confidently to live by faith. Faith needs nothing more than that!

The bottom line is this: the end of those for whom God is working everything together for good will be better than their beginning. The best words will be heard at the conclusion of their race. The largest advantage will be given to them after heaven and earth have passed away, and there is no more sea.

**THOSE WHO LOVE GOD**

**This statement confirms that loving God is not natural for men, else there would be no point to this affirmation. Loving God is the response of a faith that perceives God loved us. As it is written, *"We love him, because He first loved us"***

It is not the portion of everyone to have God work everything together for their ultimate good. This is not common to everyone. Amos once spoke of everything working against those who displeased the Lord. *"It will be as though a man fled from a lion, And a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, Leaned his hand on the wall, And a serpent bit him!"*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Amos 5:19).

The blessing set before us belongs exclusively to *"those who love God."* God is not on the side of anyone else, but He IS on the side of everyone who loves Him. This statement confirms that loving God is not natural for men, else there would be no point to this affirmation. Loving God is the response of a faith that perceives God loved us. As it is written, *"We love him, because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). And again, *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he*

*laid down his life for us"* (1 John 3:16).

In return for this love, God manages our lives, so that everything ultimately fits together, contributing to our good. The perception of this fuels both love and zeal. Those who try to love God out of a sense of mere obligation, as dictated by the first and greatest commandment, will experience great difficulty. But when they see the truth of this verse, their love for God will grow by leaps and bounds.

If our love for God wanes or diminishes, life begins to work against us. Not only is God working all things together for good to those who love Him, He is doing it in direct proportion to their love. One has only to consider men like Joseph, David, Daniel, and Paul to confirm this is true. If a waning of our love for God is not arrested, it can get to the point where God no longer works in us *"both to will and do of His own good pleasure"* (Phil 2:13). Candidly, that is a dreadful thing to contemplate, for if God is not working all things together for our good, it will not be possible for good to come to us.

**CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE**

The identity of the ones for whom God is working everything together for good is here expanded. Not only are they the ones who love God, they are described as *"the called according to His purpose."*

**The Called**

Several versions read *"THE called"* (KJV, NKJV, Websters). From a linguistic viewpoint, the article *"the"* is not in the original text. However, the use of the identifier *"the"* is proper. The word *"called"* is **not** a verb, but an adjective (**klhtoij**). That simply means it describes a people, not an activity. Here the word *"called"* is used to denote **those who have accepted the call**, and not the call itself. Even the versions that do not contain the word *"the"* emphasize that *"called"* refers to the people themselves: *"those who are called,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"who have been called,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"who are called,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> and *"them that are called."*<sup>ASV</sup> This emphasis is confirmed by the following verses that elaborate on the people

themselves, and the God who has saved them: i.e., *“for whom. . .”*

By saying *“the called,”* the Spirit places the EMPHASIS on the One who called rather than the one responding to the call. This is again confirmed by the Spirit’s elaboration. He does not develop what men did, but what was done by the Lord. From another perspective Jesus said, *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . . Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father”* (John 6:44,65). No one comes to the Lord who is not first invited. Further, they only come because they have been invited.

**Called by the Gospel**

This call is facilitated through the Gospel, as affirmed in Second Thessalonians. *“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thess 2:13-14). However, the calling by the Gospel does not in itself guarantee the benefit of Romans 8:28.

It may appear trite to say so, but it is not the Gospel that calls us. Rather, it is God Himself calling through the Gospel. There is an inward drawing that takes place in this call—a wooing toward the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Jesus referred to this drawing when He said, *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . . Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father”* (John 6:44,65). In that particular text, Jesus was not only explaining WHY people came to Him, He was also declaring why

some did NOT come to Him.

*“The called”* are those in whom all of this has been accomplished. They are the ones who have heard the Gospel of Christ. They are the ones who have *“believed through grace”* (Acts 18:27). God has *“drawn”* them to Jesus, opening their hearts so they could *“respond to the things spoken”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Acts 16:14). *“The called”* are those who have *“turned to*

*the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom 10:13). From one perspective, God does save men because they call upon His name, or cry out to receive what is promised in the Gospel of Christ. Our text, however, goes deeper into our salvation. In it, the Spirit is dealing with foundational matters. He does not want our faith to rest in the fact that we called upon the name of the Lord. Rather, it must rest on the fact that God called us according to an *“eternal purpose.”*

**It may appear trite to say so, but it is not the Gospel that calls us. Rather, it is God Himself calling through the Gospel. There is an inward drawing that takes place in this call—a wooing toward the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit.**

*God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven”* (1 Thess 1:9-10). They have been called *“with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began”* (2 Tim 1:9).

Those in Christ Jesus are described as individuals *“whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles”* (Rom 9:24). The expression *“the called,”* therefore, is a weighty one indeed. What is here said concerning them powerfully confirms that: **God is working everything together for their good.** Further, what is said of these people in the following verses removes any notion that this is a loose and fragile concept.

**According to His Purpose**

The Spirit is now making a critical distinction. It is quite true that *“whosoever shall call upon the name of*

Our identity with God is NOT in order to the fulfillment of our purposes. Rather, it is that His *“eternal purpose”* might be fulfilled (Eph 3:11). Further, this is a purpose God has *“purposed in Himself”* (Eph 1:9). The NIV reads, *“which He purposed in Christ.”* This accords with Ephesians 3:11: *“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* This objective will be expounded in the next two verses with a most unusual power.

The point being made is simply this: for everyone who has been effectively called into the execution of God’s eternal purpose, God is working everything together for their ultimate good. Their path is being Divinely orchestrated so as to conclude in their good and God’s glory. The ultimate objective to be realized is *“good.”* It is our business to take hold of this by faith.

**DIVINE DETERMINATION REVEALED**

*“<sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* Here we confront one of the most controversial verses in all of

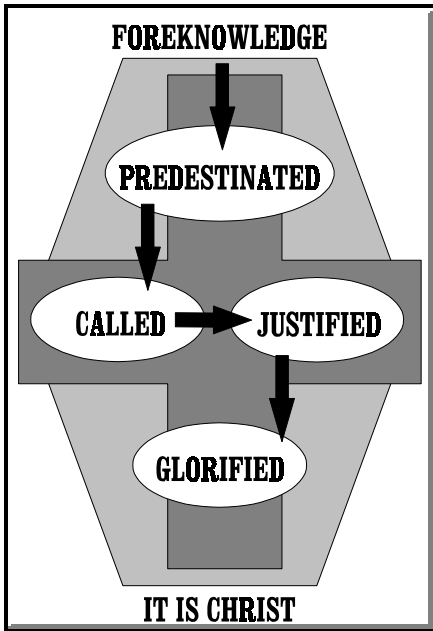
Scripture. However, we must not allow ourselves to approach it as though it was controversial. Rather, it is to be seen as a Divine expression that will sustain faith and bring confidence to our hearts. As for myself, I will approach this verse as a

precise and inspired statement of truth. Its meaning will not hinge upon word definitions, but on Apostolic doctrine. Its purpose is to confirm to our hearts what God’s intention is, and to persuade us He is fully able to accomplish it in us.

Divine Determination is not only a Reality, it is the Foundation upon which Faith rests --by Given O. Blakely

**DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE**

"For whom He foreknew. . . ." Nearly all versions, both older and contemporary, use the word "foreknew" or "did foreknow." Some freer translations read, "those of whom he had knowledge before," <sup>BBE</sup> "God knew his people in advance," <sup>NLT</sup> and "He decided beforehand who were the ones." <sup>NJB</sup> I give these translations to confirm this is a very weighty expression.



The word "foreknow" emphasizes Divine choice, not mere foresight. The teaching of the passage will confirm this. It is also supported by the meaning of the word itself. One of the primary meanings of the word used here (**proegnw**), which meaning lexicographers apply to this text, is "select in advance, choose, or appoint before hand." <sup>BarclayNewman</sup> Doctrinally, when it comes to what is done, God's foreknowledge applies to what HE does. "Known to God from eternity are all **HIS** works" (Acts 15:18). This even applies to the birth and positioning of men. "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26). <sup>NIV</sup>

It should be clear to us that God did not conceive of an eternal purpose in view of what man would do. Those whom God "Foreknew" are those upon whom His

favor rested, even before the foundation of the world. These are the individuals toward whom He was inclined. In our consideration of this facet of the Divine character, care must be taken to allow the Scriptures to form our concepts, and not theological positions developed by men.

**Associated with Determination**

The foreknowledge of God is also associated with Divine determination. It CAUSES things to happen. This use is seen in Acts 2:22-23. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Other versions read "determined purpose and foreknowledge of God," <sup>NKJV</sup> "predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," <sup>NASB</sup> and "God's set purpose and foreknowledge." <sup>NIV</sup>

Surely no one would affirm God simply foresaw that Jesus would be delivered to death. Rather, God's foreknowledge related to **what He had determined to do**. Peter uses the word in the same way when, through the Spirit, he refers to saints as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ . . ." (1 Pet 1:2).

**Christ's Foreordination**

This is further confirmed in First Peter, where the same word for foreknowledge is used (**proegnwsmenou**). "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" <sup>NASB</sup> (1:20). Other versions read "foreordained," <sup>KJV,NKJV</sup> "chosen," <sup>NIV</sup> and "destined." <sup>NRSV</sup>

When Christ was among us, He traced His total involvement in the will of God to the Father Himself. He did the will of the Father (John 5:30), said the words the Father had given Him to say (John 12:50), and did nothing except what he saw the Father doing (John

5:36). There is only way to account for "the Man Christ Jesus," and that is the determination of God Himself. Indeed, Jesus did volunteer to do God's will, but only after (speaking as a man) it had been established (Heb 10:4-8). Can you imagine the absurdity of the children of God standing before the throne of the Almighty upon the basis of their own words and deeds? **Their involvement in salvation must be upon the same basis as that of their Savior!**

Both doctrinally and linguistically, therefore, the word "foreknow" is related to Divine purpose and intent, not merely to prescience, or seeing things ahead of time.

**Further Confirmation**

To further confirm that our salvation is not the result of God knowing ahead of time what we would do, the Spirit declares, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim 1:9). However difficult it may be to receive these things, it is on the part of wisdom to simply believe them. Faith is fully capable of acknowledging this truth and deriving comfort from it.

The foreknowledge of God is also related to the placement of His love. This is the sense of the passage before us. It is also referred to in the eleventh chapter. "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?' But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal'" (Rom 11:2-4).

**There Are Special People**

God has revealed those to whom He is attracted, and for whom, He will make provision. All of these are affirmed in full awareness of the fall of man, and the corruption that resulted from that fall. A few Divine utterances on this matter will suffice to establish who will find favor in the eyes of the Lord.

1. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron 16:9).
2. "For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (Isa 66:12).
3. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psa 34:18).
4. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa 51:17).
5. "Though the LORD be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off" (Psa 138:6).
6. "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:35).

28:9). He "tests the hearts and minds" of men (Psa 7:9), and "sees the mind and the heart" of every man (Jer 10:12).

In all of these searchings, it is my understanding that God perceives capacities and inclinations as well as accomplishments.

This is involved in God knowing and separating Jeremiah before he came out of his other's womb (Jer 1:4-5). It is also

is no difference between Cain and Abel, neither of which were born again. Nor, indeed, does it suggest there was no inner distinction between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, or David and Saul. So far as being dominated by sin is concerned, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No person is able to change their condition themselves. All of them need a Savior. There is no inherent goodness in any of them. On this, there is no question. It is a matter of revelation (3:10-12).

**Tenderness of heart is what endeared people like Jacob, Joseph, David, and Cornelius to the Lord. None of these individuals were born again at the time God's favor came to them.**

Yet, there is a depth to the human nature, into which God alone can peer. He has declared in His Word that He does search the inner recesses of the heart. In my judgment, His foreknowledge relates to the hidden part of man, known only to Him. I gather these are the things God has declared He looks for.

**A Case In Point**

We have an example in Scripture of people who responded to the Gospel according to Divine appointment. Although a highly controversial passage, its wording is quite clear. The occasion was the preaching of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia. The whole city was set on fire with the powerful preaching of the Apostle, with "almost the whole city" coming together on the Sabbath day "to hear the Word of God" (Acts 13:44). However, "when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul." Intolerant of their heartless opposition, Paul and Barnabas "grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth'" (13:46-47).

No person should balk at these statements, imagining that the fallen nature of man forbids the presence of such qualities. Tenderness of heart is what endeared people like Jacob, Joseph, David, and Cornelius to the Lord. None of these individuals were born again at the time God's favor came to them. Three of them lived before an atoning sacrifice for sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit had been given. Yet God called David "a man after Mine own heart" (Acts 13:22). He said of Jacob, "Jacob have I love" (Rom 9:13). Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, was told, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4). Whatever deficiencies they may have possessed, and whatever failures may have been found in these men, their sensitivity to God was their premier quality.

related to God loving Jacob before he was born, or had done any good or evil (Rom 9:11-13). This aspect of God is also revealed in Paul, who was separated from the mother's womb, then called (Gal 1:15). Those who desire simplistic views of profound utterances need faith.

**Some Difficulties**

I am aware that this introduces some difficulties. The Spirit has already informed us "there is none righteous, no not one" (Rom 3:10), and "there is none that doeth good, no not one" (Rom 3:12). With power He has affirmed, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seekth after God" (Rom 3:10). What, then, is the point of the eyes of the Lord scanning the whole earth in quest of a man "whose heart is fully committed to Him?"<sup>NIV</sup> Why search the heart, weigh the motives, and test the mind?

The Holy Spirit declares the Gentiles were glad when they heard this, adding, "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48)<sup>NKJV</sup>.<sup>NASB</sup> The KJV reads "ordained to eternal life." Other versions read, "appointed for eternal life,"<sup>NIV</sup> "destined for eternal

The Lord "looks upon the heart" (1 Sam 16:7), and "weighs the spirits," or motives, of man (Prov 16:2). The Lord "knows the hearts of the children of men" (1 Kings 8:39), "searches the hearts," and "understands all the imaginations of the thoughts" (1 Chron

In order to resolve this difficulty, some have said there are no distinctions at all among men. After all, the Scriptures affirm, "there is no difference, for all have sinned" (Rom 3:23). However, that does not mean there



life,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "those marked out by God for eternal life,"<sup>BBE</sup> "those marked out by God for eternal life,"<sup>NewCentury</sup> "as many as were destined (appointed and ordained) to eternal life believed."  
Amplified

Every major translation reads the same way—"appointed," or "ordained." Every paraphrased version but one reads that way also, the single exception being the Living Bible, which reads "and as many as wanted eternal life, believed." No small number of people have adopted this view—i.e., that the word "ordained," or "appointed," refers to what the people themselves desired, and not God. This view is based on a variant meaning of the Greek word meaning: "disposed toward," or "agree upon." Thus the verse is imagined to say, "as many as were disposed to eternal life believed." If Acts 13:48 was the only place where such a thing is declared, we might be more tolerant of these would-be scholars. However, when God speaks on the subject elsewhere with even greater clarity, and when the combined linguists of the centuries agree on the general use of the word, we can hold no sympathy whatsoever for such a meager and watered down view.

Believing, or having faith, cannot be accounted for by human disposition. It is the Lord who opens the heart in order that people may respond to the Gospel (Acts 16:14). Faith is "obtained" (2 Pet 1:1). Those who believe do so "through grace," not human disposition (Acts 18:27). Faith does come "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 6:23).

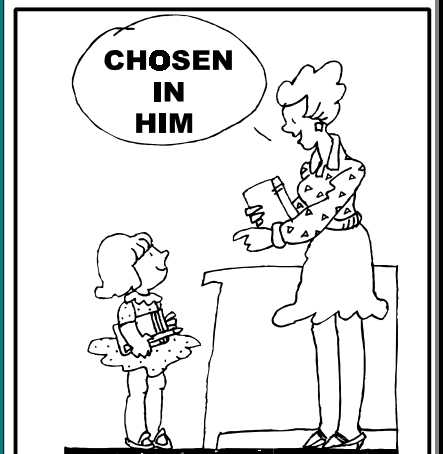
The people of God must be willing to accept Divine affirmation without questioning it. What God does will not violate any aspect of His person, nor will it find Him imposing a blessing upon those who do not desire it. That is the genius of salvation. It also is the reason why salvation in its totality will, in the end, be ascribed to God, and God alone (Rev 7:10; 19:1).

Thus, the "foreknowledge" of God is associated with His choice, His determination, and His will. It is just, and will not overlook any tender heart, or

## THE OUTSIDE VIEW



## THE INSIDE VIEW



impose salvation on anyone who is hardened.

### THE FACT OF PREDESTINATION

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate . . ." At this point, the Holy Spirit is very specific. Remember, He is building the confidence of the people of God, providing a foundation for their faith. **That foundation will not be what they have done, but what the Lord has done!**

God alone effectively predetermines things that will come to pass. He has clearly revealed this aspect of His nature. God Almighty determines, and brings to pass, certain things in a moral arena, where it looks as though human choice is the sole factor. A few reminders should suffice to establish this fact.

7. The birth of Isaac was according to God's appointment, and at an appointed time (Gen 18;14).
8. The plagues leveled against Egypt took place at a Divinely appointed time (Ex 9:5).
9. The good and sound counsel of Ahithophel was overthrown by God's appointment (2 Sam 7;14).
10. The laws of nature were appointed by God (Jer 33:25).
11. The purchase of the potter's field with the betrayal money of Judas "as the Lord appointed" (Matt 27:10).
12. The times and exact places where people would live were appointed by God (Acts 17:26).

13. The day of judgment has been appointed by the Lord (Acts 17:31).
14. Jesus appointed a kingdom to His disciples (Lk 22:29).

With great power, the Lord declares that predetermination is a part of His nature. "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, **declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it"<sup>NKJV</sup> (Isa 46:9-11).**

Categorically we are told believers were "chosen" in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). The living God "**predestinated**" them "to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). Those in Christ obtain an inheritance because they have been "**predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will**" (Eph 1:11). The Thessalonians were told, "God from the beginning chose you **for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**" (2 Thess 2:13-14). God's choice was implemented through the separating

power of the Spirit and the belief of the truth of the Gospel by the people. However, just as in the passage we are considering, the call by the Gospel came **after** the Divine determination had been made. None of that removes the responsibility to believe, or excuses the presence of unbelief.

When the early church effectively prayed for boldness and power, they explained the death of Jesus through the hands of lawless men, by tracing it back to God's pre-determination. *"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done"* (Acts 4:27-28). They did not have the theological confusion and difficulties that characterize our generation. They were more interested in declaring the Gospel with power than preserving the wilted doctrines of an emaciated institution. Oh, for a return to the purity of faith in and love for the Lord.

The Gospel itself is associated with the predetermination of God: *"but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory"*<sup>NASB</sup> (1 Cor 2:7). This, of course, accounts for the effectiveness of the Gospel – why it is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16).

#### Fulfillment Is Certain

When we speak of predestination, we are speaking of something that is sure, and cannot fail of fulfillment. That is the whole purpose of this passage, to anchor our faith in the certitude of God's *"eternal purpose."* What God predestinates, or determines, comes to pass. Jesus was not only the one *"foreordained before the foundation of the world"* (1 Pet 1:20), He actually *"laid down" His life, "a ransom for many,"* in fulfillment of that predetermination.

The vocabulary of the Holy Spirit, or words *"taught by the Holy Spirit"*<sup>NASB</sup> (1 Cor 2:13), include *"predestinate"* (Rom

8:29-30), *"predestinated"* (Eph 1:5,11), *"foreordained"* (1 Pet 1:20), *"foreknow"* (Rom 8:29), *"foreknew"* (Rom 11:2), *"foreknowledge"* (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2), *"determined before"* (Acts 4:28), *"chosen"* (Eph 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 2:9), and *"elect"* (Matt 24:24; Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; Tit 1:11 Pet 1:2), and *"elected"* (1 Pet 5:13). The fact of predestination, therefore, cannot be effectively negated or questioned. God has extended Himself to make this aspect of His character known. **Those who make a studied practice of either ignoring God's predestination, or disputing its existence, will eventually have to explain to God why they did.**

**PREDESTINATED CONFORMITY**  
The predestination of God is not a

**The meaning of this passage is this: God has predetermined that everyone He adopts as sons (8:19) will be fashioned to bear the "image of Christ." That is not a commandment, it is a predetermination. It is not a possibility, it is a predestined purpose.**

lifeless doctrine. Nor, indeed, does it center around the individual believer. The Lord's determination has to do with the culmination of His work. This is the revealed destiny of everyone who lives by faith, or is *"in Christ Jesus."* ***"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son."*** Other versions read, *"the likeness of His Son,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"be made like His Son,"*<sup>BEBE</sup> and *"become like His Son."*<sup>NLT</sup>

The meaning of this passage is this: God has predetermined that everyone He adopts as sons (8:19) will be fashioned to bear the *"image of Christ."* That is not a commandment, it is a predetermination. It is not a possibility, it is a predestined purpose. It is not a goal for which we are to strive, but a work God will do.

#### The "IMAGE" of His Son

Why does the Spirit say *"image of His Son?"* Why not simply say *"conformed to His Son?"* Remember, the passage before us is elaborating on the manner in which we are being brought to glory. We are coming through the veil of sufferings, being *"saved by hope."* What we will ultimately be is determining the pathway through which we are being led. We are *"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ"* (8:17). That has to do with our future, and our present affiliation with God, through Christ and by the Spirit, is preparing us for that future. In this glorious work, the Son of God is set before us **through the Gospel.** That presentation is, in a very real sense, *"the image of His Son."*

The idea is that God, through the Gospel, has set before us the Image to which we are being conformed. Of particular emphasis is that suffering is one of the means through which this conformity is being accomplished. As the Spirit said through Peter, *"But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"* (1 Pet 2:21).

#### Not A Sudden Departure

Our text is not a sudden departure from the line of reasoning being developed. Ponder again what marvelous thoughts have been presented to us.

15. Faith has brought us into a fierce struggle with the flesh (7:15-25).
16. We are not condemned, even though we struggle and are tempted (8:1-4).
17. No concessions can be made to the flesh, even though it makes demands upon us (8:5-8).
18. The Holy Spirit is assisting us in the struggle with the flesh, directing and empowering us to mortify it (8:9-13).
19. The Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are the sons of God, even though we are engaged in warfare (8:16).
20. Our sonship and future glory are related to our present sufferings (8:17).

21. Our sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us (8:19).
22. The whole creation joins us in the travailing groans of expectation (8:20-22).
23. The redeemed are groaning in travail, expecting the redemption of their bodies (8:23).
24. The expectation of hope enables us to fight the good fight of faith (8:24-25).
25. The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, making effective intercession for us, because we do not know what to pray for (8:26-27).
26. God Himself is working everything together, including our suffering and groaning, for our ultimate good (8:28).

Verses 29-30 explain WHY all is being worked together for our good. It is not just happenstance. Divine purpose is behind it all. God has predestinated that His children will be conformed to the "image," or representation, of His Son. **That predetermination is what guarantees the outcome—that all will work together for our good.**

**Conformity to the Image Involves Means**

This verse is not teaching a mere Divine appointment, but **the means through which that sure and unaltered assignation will be realized!** Because we are standing on holy ground, great care must be taken to properly present what is declared in this passage. I have sought to make a distinction between being conformed to the "image of His Son," and being conformed to the Son. Let it be clear, we "shall be like Him," according to the promise of God (1 John 3:1-2). When Jesus appears, we will also "appear with Him in glory" (Col 3:4), receiving bodies "like unto His glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21). That is a precious truth that must be heartily embraced by the saints.

However, this is not what is being taught in the verses under consideration. God has predestinated His children will be conformed to the "image," or representation, of His Son. In my judgment, this is declaring the same thing

affirmed in Second Corinthians. "But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same **image** from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (3:18). Later in the same book, this reality is stated again: "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (4:6).

**In our sufferings, the Holy Spirit so powerfully intercedes for us that God enables us to see Christ Jesus, His Son, more clearly and precisely. As we behold that revealed "image of His Son," we are actually conformed to what is perceived.**

This process refers to being changed by what we have beheld of Christ. God is conforming us to what we see, or perceive, of Christ Jesus. This is not cast into the area of personal opinion, for God Himself is the One revealing the Son. He does this through the Gospel, but in an intensely personal way. The principle is precisely the same as experienced by Moses in the holy mount. His person was altered by what he saw of God—which is precisely the point in Second Corinthians 3:7-18).

In our sufferings, the Holy Spirit so powerfully intercedes for us that God enables us to see Christ Jesus, His Son, more clearly and precisely. As we behold that revealed "image of His Son," we are actually conformed to what is perceived.

**An Example**

We have a concrete example of this in the death of Stephen. When this mighty man of God was rejected by the Jewish council, Scripture says, "he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus

standing at the right hand of God." The sight was so glorious he shouted, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 7:55-56). Now, we will see how that perception influenced Stephen.

The council immediately led Stephen out of the city and stoned him. As the stones struck upon this saint, he knelt down, crying out with a loud voice: "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60). What had happened? In his sufferings, Stephen was given to see the Lord Jesus, and was conformed to the image he perceived! His response to his own sufferings precisely conformed to the Lord's own response to those who killed Him: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

**Our Ultimate Conformity**

We are being conformed the "image" of Christ now through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. To the degree we see Jesus, that change is accomplished "from one stage of glory to another." **When Jesus comes again, the conforming process will reach its culmination.** Then, in the fullest and most precise sense, "we shall be like Him!" And what is the means through which that blessed conformity will be accomplished? We are not left to speculate on the matter: "because we shall see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:2). We will be conformed to "the image" – what we behold. Then our beholding will be unfettered and complete—"just as He is." For that reason, the conformity will be thorough! This is the predestinated purpose of the Almighty. It begins now, and will be consummated at the appearing of Christ.

Jesus is, then, a pattern of what believers are pre-appointed to become. While this must become our purpose also, that is not the point of this text. Here the Spirit affirms this to be God's predetermined and unwavering purpose. This is the settled objective of the whole redemptive enterprise. There is not the slightest chance this will not be accomplished.

As demonstrated throughout Divine

history, God is fully capable of accomplishing His purpose. His word has gone out on this matter, and it will not return unto Him "void," or "without accomplishing" what He has determined <sup>NASB</sup> (Isa 55:11). Those whom He foreknew **will** be "conformed to the image of His Son." Their perception of Jesus will precisely determine what they become. It all begins here, in the midst of suffering. It will be brought to a glorious consummation when God shows, or unveils, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim 6:15).

**The Relevance of Seeing Jesus**

All of this accents the importance of perceiving Jesus now—knowing and understanding Him! **Preaching and teaching that opens Jesus to the understanding of people prepares them for transformation. When men do not see Jesus, they are shut up to nature.** Through the revelation of the Gospel "we see Jesus" (Heb 2:9) – that is His "image." It is through that perception that we are conformed to what we behold by faith!

**A Sterling Example for Us**

Allow me to bring Paul to the witness stand. He will confirm what I have said, and show the marvelous reality of God's predetermined purpose. In a rare and extended declaration of what motivated him, Paul revealed the powerful effects of perceiving Jesus.

When Paul confronted Jesus, it constrained him to change his whole purpose and focus. Although he was part of an elite group within an elite race, and although he had unparalleled religious advantages, he counted all of them "loss for Christ." He willingly and zealously did this "in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." <sup>NASB</sup> In comparison to "gaining Christ" he saw everything else to be "dung." With unparalleled fervency Paul desired to "know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." <sup>NKJV</sup> He was unrelenting in his pursuit of this objective.

Although confronted by seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Paul "pressed on," that he might "lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." <sup>NKJV</sup> Although he knew full well he had not yet apprehended, his aim became single, as he forgot the things that were behind and stretched forward to "things which are ahead." He pressed "toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:7-14). The result was that his labors were indefatigable. In fact he "labored more abundantly" than all the other apostles (1 Cor 15:10). He approached his appointment with the same kind of zeal the Son of God approached His (Lk 9:51).

What made the Apostle do this? Why was he so radically transformed from being a persecutor to being a member of

It is comforting to know God has predestinated conformity to Christ's image! From a practical point of view, that means you WILL become like what you see of Jesus.

the household of faith? It is because he saw Jesus! He was being conformed to Christ's perceived image! He knew this is how God has determined valid change to take place, and therefore determined to "know" Christ, experience the "power of His resurrection," and be made "conformable to His death" through sufferings.

**Deliver Us From Mere Academic Views**

How the church needs to be delivered from lifeless academic views of Jesus! The Gospel contains the only valid view of the Son of God, and it is to be believed, embraced, and heartily sought. Historical views of Jesus, however interesting they may appear, will never conform anyone to "the image of His Son." Philosophizing about Jesus will not change anyone, or

make them more like their Savior!

**Comforting to Know**

It is comforting to know God has predestinated conformity to Christ's image! **From a practical point of view, that means you WILL become like what you see of Jesus.** This does not refer to an intellectual view, but the persuasion of faith, which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (with the eye)." **What faith perceives of the Son of God will have as sure an effect upon man's spirit as the sight of God's glory had an effect on Moses' face!** The final transformation will come when those who were being changed in the earth behold the Lord Jesus in all of His glory!

Furthermore, earth cannot produce a situation where the sight of Jesus can be effectively blocked! He can be seen while Stephen is being stoned. Paul and Silas can see him from prison, while their feet are in stocks. Peter can see him from a prison cell, and John the Baptist while he is on his way to be beheaded.

**Not Predestinated to Be Sons, But Sons Predestinated to be Like THE Son**

This text is not teaching that God predestinated who would be saved, or become His children. I do not question this is taught elsewhere, although care must be taken in drawing unwarranted conclusions from those affirmations (Eph 1:4-5,11; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:2).

Our text declares what God has predestinated concerning His children—those who are born of the Spirit. **They will become like Jesus Christ!** The process begins now, being especially made known in the crucible of suffering. It will be brought to completion when we behold the "only begotten Son" in all of His glory.

All of this has a significant bearing on us now. Those who are presently being "changed from glory unto glory" have, in that change, the pledge of future glory. **Those who are not being changed**

are not beholding Jesus! If it is true that God has predetermined that men will be conformed to the "IMAGE of His Son," we had better keep that "image" in

Christ's brethren are also His children. They are His brethren because God is their Father as well as His. As it is written, "For both He who sanctifies and

be "like Him." All of His brethren will be "like Him."

That is God's predestinated purpose. It cannot be negated or changed. It only remains whether or not we become involved in the conforming process here and now. If we do, we will be fully conformed to the "image His Son" when He appears. If we do not, His appearance will find us consigned to perdition.

**Let it be clear in your mind that God's aim is not simply to remit your sin – although that is necessary for the larger purpose. Neither, indeed, is His objective form you to reach all of the world for Jesus – although that too is involved in the ultimate purpose.**

#### Salvation Is Not A Mere Formality

With the era of an academic approach to the things of God, salvation began to be viewed as a mere formality. All manner of doctrines have been foisted upon men that represent salvation as a once-for-all experience that takes place at a given point in time. No essential change is perceived as taking place after that. Some have formulated this into a doctrinal statement. Others, refusing to adopt a credal statement, simply live as though that were the case.

Thus churches are literally filled with people who have made no apparent progress in the faith at all. They appear to see Christ no clearer than they ever did, and perhaps even less. There is no obvious conforming work going on. They do not seem to think more and more like Jesus, or increasingly see things with "the mind of Christ." Most of these people have little or no confidence or assurance, and it is no wonder. **It is difficult to have any degree of assurance when you are almost totally lacking any evidence of being related to Jesus!**

It is not our purpose to sit in judgment upon other people. There is One who is able to save or destroy (James 4:12). However, it is our obligation to boldly proclaim the revealed purpose of God—even, His predestinated purpose. Where that purpose is not taking place, there is no evidence of salvation. It is conceivable that God is conforming those who, because of flawed teaching or spiritual immaturity, are not yet aware of it. That is one of the reasons for this strong section of Scripture.

view. This is not a mere mental image, or an impression created by human imagination. Rather, it is the "image" developed by faith when the Gospel is believed, embraced, pondered, and preferred above all else.

#### THE REASON FOR PREDESTINATION

What is the reason for God predestinating that His children be conformed to the "image of His Son?" It is marvelous for simplicity, yet mysterious because of its profundity. It is in order "that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." The objective was to have a whole race of personalities that were like Jesus Christ. He was the "Firstborn," the first of a new race who would all become like Him. They would be changed into His image.

Let it be clear in your mind that God's aim is not simply to remit your sin – although that is necessary for the larger purpose. Neither, indeed, is His objective form you to reach all of the world for Jesus – although that too is involved in the ultimate purpose. The revealed purpose is not to build an institution or give you extraordinary health and wealth! Such delusions are unbecoming for the saints of God. Whatever good may be seen in them, they are centered in this world, not "the world to come." The "image of His Son" is the point of conformity.

**Christ's Brethren Are His Children**

those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto My brethren"<sup>NKJV</sup> (Heb 2:11). This circumstance is also reflected in the resurrected Lord's words to Mary Magdalene, the very first person to whom He appeared following His resurrection. ". . . go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

The same individuals are also called Christ's "children." Thus, He is depicted as standing at last before the Father saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb 2:13). Isaiah prophesied that the vicarious death of Christ would yield multitudinous offspring. "But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand" (Isa 53:10). The Psalmist boldly announced, "A seed shall serve him" (Psa 22:30). Jesus is like "a grain of wheat" that went into the ground, but brought forth "much fruit" (John 12:24).

Aaron's children were not like him (Lev 10:1). Eli's children were not like him (1 Sam 2:12). David's children were not like him (2 Sam 13). Joseph's brethren were not like him (Gen 37). David's brethren were not like him (1 Sam 17:28). But all of Jesus' children will

**CHRIST'S BRETHREN ARE ALSO HIS CHILDREN, AND THEY WILL BE CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE.**

## THE APPOINTED PROCEDURE

<sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." In our text, the Lord is "declaring the end from the beginning . . . the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa 46:10). This is a marvelous proclamation of the involvement of God in every aspect of our salvation, from beginning to end. Several objectives are achieved in this declaration.

27. What God is doing in Christ Jesus is clarified.
28. The surety of salvation is established.
29. The processes by which we are being brought to glory are affirmed.
30. The preeminence of God Himself in salvation is declared.
31. The points at which we are identified with the processes are made known.
32. A basis for strong confidence and assurance is substantiated.
33. The critical choices—the ones guaranteeing the completion of our salvation—belong to God alone.

Allow me to underscore that this is a commentary on the working of God, not the response of men. HE predestinated. HE calls. HE justified. HE glorifies. Faith can build on that foundation!

It is another way of saying, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

The Lord knows all of those to whom these words apply. As it is written, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His'" (2 Tim 2:19). The text has been clear on this. God foreknew all of His children, and predetermined they would be conformed to the image of His Son. This is **WHY** "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (v 28). This is the Spirit's explanation for the safe arrival of "the

elect" in the world to come. It is not given to cause confusion, but to spawn and nourish hope. If we will believe, that is precisely what this proclamation will do for us. It will help us, and will not hinder us.

### CALLING

"Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called. . . ." At this point we learn that while Divine choices are not always known to us, we can now associate our calling—something we DO know—with God's predetermination. In fact, Peter puts calling and election together: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your **calling and election** sure. . . ." (2 Pet 1:10). Predestination, or election, is not to be viewed as a cold and lifeless doctrine! **A Living God cannot proclaim lifeless doctrine!**

**Those who are predestined are called. From the beginning, God has made known He calls, invites, or summons. This is the very first response of God to the fall of man: "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"**

### Divine Choice Implemented by Means

Immediately we see that the foreknowledge and predestination of God are carried out by appointed means. In the matter of salvation, God does not accomplish His determinations by decree, or Divine fiat. His people are not spoken into existence.

### The Predestinated Are Called

Those God foreknew and determined to be conformed to the image of His Son are "called." God can put a hook in the jaw of His creation, and draw them in, so to speak. Thus He said to Sennacherib, "Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My bridle in your lips, And I

will turn you back by the way which you came" (Isa 37:29). **This is not, however, how salvation is implemented!** The salvation of God is set in motion by a call.

Those who are predestined are called. From the beginning, God has made known He calls, invites, or summons. This is the very first response of God to the fall of man: "And the LORD God **called** unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Gen 3:9). A call is how Abraham was brought into the working of the Lord (Gen 12:1-3). God brought Moses into the work of appointed deliverance when he "**called** unto him out of the midst of the bush" (Ex 3:4). Samuel was summoned into Divine employment when "**the Lord called**" him (1 Sam 3:4). When Jesus chose His disciples, He did it by **calling** them unto Himself (Matt 10:1).

In all of the examples, the ones called were first chosen. It is the same in our text: "those He predestined, He also called." <sup>NIV</sup> Elsewhere in Scripture, we are told that God calls men by the Gospel of His Son. "God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 2:14). The Spirit uses the Gospel to awaken conviction and deep desire within those who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). The Gospel boldly announces "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). That is obviously an invitation that is open to every person.

But our text does not say every person is called – only those who are "predestinated." This does not mean the Gospel is not addressed to everyone, or that a general summons is not sounded to "every creature" (Mk 16:16). Rather, this is viewing the totality and conclusion of salvation from the beginning. These are common factors to all who ultimately will be glorified.

### God Knows How

God knows how to get the Gospel call to those He foreknew. He can, for example, get the Gospel to the treasurer of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, whom no one but God knew was searching to know the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy of Jesus (Acts 8:26-29). The Lord once directed Paul to remain in Corinth for, He said, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). Who can forget the whole city of Samaria responding to the Gospel call (Acts 8:5-6), or the centurion Cornelius and his entire household, directed miraculously by God so they could hear the call (Acts 10:1-48). Lydia and several women by a river praying, unexpectedly heard the call from Paul and Silas (Acts 16:13-15). The Philippian jailor, awakened by tumult and chaos, heard the call of the Gospel and responded (Acts 16:25-34). What of Saul of Tarsus himself, arrested by a Divine call from the glorified Christ (Acts 9:1-19).

These occasions did not happen by mere chance. **They were Divinely orchestrated!** A holy angel directed Philip to go to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26). The Lord Himself appeared to Paul, directing him to remain in Corinth (Acts 18:9). An angel of God appeared to Cornelius, preparing him for the Gospel, and instructing him what to do (Acts 10:3). A vision and voice "from heaven" informed Peter of his role in Cornelius hearing the Gospel (Acts 10:11-16). Lydia, the Philippian jailor, and those with them, heard the Gospel because of a vision Paul had in which "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9). As for Saul of Tarsus, he heard what he was to do because the glorified Christ Himself appeared to him saying, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6).

When you view salvation from the perspective of the day of judgment, it will be easy to loudly confess, "those He predestined, He also called." <sup>NIV</sup> He has provided us the details of particular conversions to assure us of this. If we are

unable to see the details of our own calling, we are still to believe it was not the result of mere chance. Nothing in Scripture will lead a person to such a conclusion. We must be sure we do not allow man-made theology to do so.'

**When you view salvation from the perspective of the day of judgment, it will be easy to loudly confess, "those He predestined, He also called." <sup>NIV</sup> He has provided us the details of particular conversions to assure us of this. If we are unable to see the details of our own calling, we are still to believe it was not the result of mere chance.**

### An Inside View

What we are reading is an inside view of salvation. It is not intended to be declared to the lost, providing them with an excuse for not seeking the Lord. This word is meant to comfort the people of God, assuring them He will complete the work He has started in them.

Jesus offered a word of explanation concerning the reception of His word by some, while others failed to receive it. "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God" (John 8:47). When reading this, keep in mind, "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them" (Prov 20:12). Particularly when contemplating responding to the Gospel call, it is God "that planted the ear" (Psa 94:9). There are those who DO have "ears to hear" (Matt 11:15). Those who lack such ears do so because "the LORD hath not given [them] an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deut 29:4). That explanation is revealed and should be accepted.

Those "with ears to hear" have NOT escaped the attention of God. Whether they are in a lonely desert, by a river, or in an idolatrous Grecian city, "whom He did predestinate, them He also called."

He will appeal to their volition and to their will! He will see to it that the Gospel gets to them just as surely as it did to you!

### Not Intended to Make Us Slothful

God forbid that any should conclude that this circumstance justifies a slothful stance in regard to preaching the Gospel "to every creature." Rather, as we walk by faith and lean not to our own understanding, the Lord will direct our path (Prov 3:5-6) into productive service.

### Do Not Draw Fine Lines

Some have drawn fine theological lines that allow for the formation of a highly systematic theology. They conclude that because men are "dead in trespasses and sins," they cannot respond to God. They must first be awakened from the "sleep of death." But this is not the reasoning or declaration of the Holy Spirit. The cause of our salvation is so presented that we may conclude in faith, "all things are of God" (2 Cor 5:18), and "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever" (Rom 11:36).

You were called by God because He foreknew you and predestinated you to be conformed to the image of His Son. That is how you are to reason on the matter. That way of thinking will produce an abundance of thanksgiving and propel you into hearty labor for His great name.

No wonder the saints of God are referred to as "the called" (Rom 1:6; 8:28). No marvel they are admonished to "see" their "calling" (1 Cor 1:26). We have been "CALLED" into Christ's fellowship (1 Cor 1:9), "to peace" (1 Cor 7:15), and "into the grace of Christ" (Gal 1:6). Believers have been "CALLED" into liberty (Gal 5:13), God's "kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12), and "unto holiness" (1 Thess 4:7).

### JUSTIFICATION

"... and whom He called, them He also justified..." The text does **not** say that justification is offered to every one that is called, but that the ones He calls are "also justified." That tells us He is

not speaking of the general call that goes out to the whole world. These are those who were effectively drawn to Christ by God, and whom Jesus did not cast away (John 6:44). This is admittedly a high view, but faith needs to hear it. Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

These are the people who are "justified" – those effectively called. Justification is the imputation of God's righteousness. From the underside, it is the complete acquittal from all guilt. As it is written, "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). From the top side, justification is being "made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]" (2 Cor 5:21). Justification involves the complete removal of the curse brought on by sin. It also involves the impartation of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).

And to whom is this singular blessing given? It is for those whom "He also called!" The invitation of the Gospel, then, is necessarily joined to "justification," or being "made righteous" (Rom 5:19). This involves reconciliation to God (Col 1:21), deliverance from indebtedness to the flesh (Rom 8:12), and liberation from the defiled conscience (Heb 9:14). It includes peace with God (Rom 5:1), fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and access to the Father and His grace (Rom 5:2; Eph 3:12).

God **Himself** justifies: "**HE** also justified." It is not the result of human ingenuity or mere conformity to a code. It follows the call of God: "whom **HE** called, them **HE** also justified."

#### The Association with Our Text

We cannot allow our minds to drift away from the subject at hand: suffering with Christ (8:17). We are suffering together with the "whole creation." Christians, particularly those who know very little about the magnitude and glory of their salvation, will be tempted to recoil from suffering. They may even consider modifying their commitment to

Christ, or no longer confessing Him before men.

The reasoning of our text is this: "If you are tempted to despair because of suffering, consider what marvelous benefits have come to you because you were sensitive to the call of God! If such blessings followed your calling, what will attend your justification? Even though the world is against you, all of heaven is for you. Do not draw back from suffering, it is the appointed means of coming into an eternal reign!"

#### GLORIFICATION

"... and whom He justified, them He also glorified." This is the language of

**If you are tempted to despair because of suffering, consider what marvelous benefits have come to you because you were sensitive to the call of God! If such blessings followed your calling, what will attend your justification? Even though the world is against you, all of heaven is for you. Do not draw back from suffering, it is the appointed means of coming into an eternal reign!**

hope. It is something that has not yet been experienced, but is as sure as our calling and justification. Glorification is as much a part of salvation as being "called." It is as essential as being "justified." It is something that man can no more accomplish than his own calling or justification. This is something that God must do, or it will not be done. The point of our text is that He **WILL** do it.

Being "glorified" is the final stage of being "conformed to the image of His Son." It is when we will "be like Him," and it will happen because we will "see Him as He is" (1 John 3:1-2). Glorification involves the complete removal of every competing and inhibiting influence. It also involves receiving a glorified body that is like Christ's "glorious body" (Phil 3:20-21).

This is glory that is eternal, and does

not pertain to life in this world. It is the appointed answer to inward struggle, and "the sufferings of this present time" (8:18). We are told that salvation is "with eternal glory" (1 Tim 2:10), and that we have been called "unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pet 5:10). The Lord Jesus, in His mediatorial ministry, is "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10). All of this confirms that the purpose of God's "great salvation" is primarily related to the world to come, not this one. It is in prospect of the time when death will be "swallowed up in victory," and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Although believers have not yet been "glorified," it is spoken of as though it was already accomplished. The reason for this is that God has already determined it. But why is there such an unwavering note in this text? Is it not possible to fall into sin again, and actually be overcome by it, producing a worse state than at the first. Indeed, it is! As it is written, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Pet 2:20). Why, then, speak of being glorified as though it had already occurred—especially since we remain in a danger zone? Can faith lay hold of a word like this?

#### This Is the Norm

Settle it in your mind that while falling away is possible, it is certainly not the norm of the Kingdom. Those who are "fallen from grace" (Gal 5:4) or "depart from the faith" (1 Tim 4:1), have neglected the means of salvation. Presently, the benefits of salvation are ALL held by faith. Glorification will remove the necessity of faith, at least as we know it.



As long as we live by faith, glorification is sure. It is appointed to follow justification. That justification is both obtained and maintained "by faith" (Rom 3:28; 5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:24). It is not possible to have faith without being justified. Equally true, it is not possible to be justified and not be glorified.

Jesus prayed for the glorification of those who had been given to Him by the Father. "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold **My glory**, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). John clarified that beholding Jesus as He is will result in us being "like Him" (1 John 3:2).

This appointed procedure is also proclaimed in Second Thessalonians. "For this purpose He called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>NRSV</sup> (2:14).

All of this is intended to confirm to our hearts the fulness and surety of salvation. As faith lays hold of this word, it will strengthen us to endure suffering in anticipation of being glorified. It is as sure as our calling and justification.

#### Why Is So Little Being Said

If God has called us to obtain glory, and if that is the appointed result of being justified, why is so little being said about glory these days? Why is such a stress being placed on "the affairs of this life,"

to the neglect of the coming glory? Why is the church being flooded with supposed experts in solving problems, rather than men who are able to assist men and women in preparing for glory? And why, with all of these experts, do we appear to have more problems than ever before? Why aren't these specialists more special?

Why do we hear so little about heaven, being glorified, and reigning with Jesus? Why are such things as the coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the day of judgment so rarely declared? Why does hope languish and faith wither? It is because the matters declared in this passage are perceived as having no real significance to the institutional program. They simply are not seen as relevant, and are thus neglected, and often despised.

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## THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

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"<sup>31</sup> **What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?**" It is not enough to simply adopt a proper theological position. The truth must touch our hearts, provoking us to think correctly about the opposition we face. If opposition from the enemy is an integral part of spiritual life, then we should be able to view it properly. Thus the marvelous things set before us demand a response from us.

The Spirit has lifted us into the heavenly realms. He has told us the reason for our sufferings, and that we are not alone in them. He has announced that nothing about salvation has been left to chance. From beginning to end, the Lord Himself is involved. He knew us before the foundation of the world. He determined we would be conformed to the image of His Son. He called us. He justified us. He will yet glorify us. These are not suppositions or possibilities, they are bold proclamations to be believed. Now it is necessary to arrive at a God-honoring conclusion.

#### WHAT SHALL WE SAY?

If we could look into men's hearts,

**Who is the professed believer who will dare to question that God is "for" them, working everything together for their good? Who will question His benevolence because they face hardship, suffer, or experience fierce opposition?**

many would say, "I do not believe 'these things!'" Others would not say that, but they never declare "these things." Although the Spirit has stated some very remarkable realities, they have not registered upon the hearts of such people. They think nothing of simply eliminating them from their preaching and teaching.

The Spirit, however, will not allow us to brush these things aside. He bring them to bear upon our hearts and minds. If we will hear what the Spirit is saying, He will lead us to consider these matters and think correctly about them. The persuasion of them is critical to our triumph in both life and death.

#### GOD IS FOR US

"If God is for us . . ." This does not suggest that God is NOT "for us," but actually affirms that He IS. This is family language. The "us" refers to those who have been justified by faith and against whom there is no condemnation. The fact that God foreknew us proves He is "for us." Predestinating that we be conformed to the image of His Son confirms He is "for us." Consider how our God broke through the silence of ignorance, the deadness of sin, and the forces of darkness, calling us to Himself. That proves He is "for us." The fact that He justified us declares that He is "for us." His revealed intentions to glorify us also substantiates that He is "for us." Let no one doubt this fact, or suppose that God is against them if they have believed the record He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11)!

Who is the professed believer who will dare to question that God is "for" them, working everything together for their good? Who will question His benevolence because they face hardship, suffer, or experience fierce opposition? One of the great tragedies of our time is that self-acclaimed Christian teachers

lead people to imagine that questioning God or even being angry with Him is all right. It is not all right! It is evidence of unbelief, and without faith, it is impossible to please God!

The point of the words, "If God be for us," is to establish that there can be no justified doubt of this. This is so firm we can reason upon the basis of its reality, and derive comfort for our souls.

#### WHO CAN BE AGAINST US

"... who CAN be against us?" Some versions read, "who IS against us." NASB, NIV, NRSV It is like saying, "Is Goliath effectively against David? Can Nebuchadnezzar really do anything against Daniel? Are the 450 prophets of Baal really jeopardizing Elijah? If God is for Joseph, will his brothers be able to bring him down? If God has decreed Sarah will have a son,

will anything be able to stop it?"

Oh, the people of God do have enemies. But all of them, to a person, are under the governing power of God. Every child of God can say to every one of their enemies, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above" NASB (John 19:11). Not even the devil himself can harass us without permission (Lk 22:31).

This question ["Who can be against us?"] is affirming that **the process revealed cannot be aborted by any foe from any realm!** No enemy can stop the process of being conformed to the image of God's Son! No foe can stop those foreknown by God from being called. No hostile forces can prohibit God from justifying those He calls. There is no

opponent that can keep God from glorifying those He has justified! That is the way it is, and faith accepts it!

The "ransomed of the Lord" can cry out with David, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around" (Psa 3:6). And again, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psa 56:11). And again, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psa 27:1). These are proper conclusions to the doctrines set before us. They make for confidence, boldness, and great joy. No person who has received the love of the truth has cause to be fearful of man or circumstance! Child of God, believe this: **God IS for you!**

## THE REASONING OF FAITH

"<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" There is more to be said on this matter: "What shall we say to these things?" They are too great and powerful for simplistic responses. Faith can reach into the depths of sanctified reason, coming up with conclusions that bring glory to God, honor to Jesus, and strength to the heart.

#### GOD DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON

Jesus once cried out to be spared: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt 26:39). Of this occasion it says, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb 5:7). The Father did not deliver Jesus in the sense of not allowing Him to die. Instead, He delivered Him from being swallowed up of death. In other words, He raised Him from the dead. However, He did not spare Him from death.

Who was more worthy to be spared than Jesus? He had not sinned, and there was no guile in His mouth. He had

spoken all the Father had given Him to say, and did only what He saw the Father doing. He had went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil. Who was more fitting to be spared? But God "did not spare His OWN SON."

#### GOD DELIVERED JESUS UP

Peter declared Jesus was "delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Paul goes even further, declaring it was God Himself who delivered Him up. It was the Father who delivered Him "for our offenses" (Rom 4:25). The Savior was not victimized by the powers of darkness. God delivered His Son over to them. As Jesus Himself said to those arresting Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour,

and the power of darkness" NKJV (Lk 22:52-53).

Jesus was "the Lamb of God," and God Himself offered Him! He "delivered Him up for us all!" Never forget, we are not saved by what men did to Jesus! It is not the opposition of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod that saved us! It was God's opposition to the Son, when He laid on Him the stripes by which we are healed! The wrath of God thrashed Jesus on the cross in order that we might go free. In the deepest and fullest sense of the word, Jesus "tasted death for every man" (Heb 2:9).

#### GOD FREELY GIVES US ALL THINGS

The Spirit is confirming to our hearts that God is "for us," and nothing can be effectively "against us." If God did not spare His Son, delivering Him over to death in order that we might be

**The Father did not deliver Jesus in the sense of not allowing Him to die. Instead, He delivered Him from being swallowed up of death. In other words, He raised Him from the dead. However, He did not spare Him from death.**

reconciled, what will He do for us now that Jesus is raised and we are justified? If He extended Himself for us when we were enemies, what will He do for us now that we are reconciled. If we received grace when we were sinners, what will we receive now that we are righteous? Here is the same line of reasoning stated earlier in Romans. *"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were*

*enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (5:8-10).

Now that we have received the Spirit of adoption, God will "freely," or graciously and abundantly, give us "all things." These are "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3). They are everything required to safely negotiate through the straits of suffering and opposition, weakness and trouble, to the other side!

If God did not withhold His Son when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," will He refuse to give us what we need to resist the devil, go on to perfection, and endure suffering? Indeed, He will not! When we are "without money," we can "come," "buy," and "eat" at the Masters table. Now that we are "in Christ Jesus," "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11). Child of God, you can count on that! You can receive precisely what you need, when you need it!

## THE CONFIDENCE OF FAITH

<sup>33</sup> *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*" With great power, the Spirit continues to teach us how to respond to the question, "What shall we say to these things?" Proper questions are deserving of proper answers! Thus the Spirit does not leave the answer up to men. Rather He tutors us in how to answer, knowing that faith will at once recognize the validity of the response and derive help from it.

### BRINGING A CHARGE

The saints of God have been declared to be "justified" – fully exonerated of all guilt. Is that justification thorough? Is there a personality in heaven, earth, or hell, that can level a charge against the person the mighty God has justified? Can someone dredge through our sordid past and find something that can be charged against us?

Let us bring Joshua the high priest to the witness stand, and let him testify on this matter. In his case we will confront the ultimate enemy who will raise the ultimate accusation. The accusation will also be attempted before the ultimate tribunal, the throne of Almighty God. This vision was revealed to Zechariah the prophet.

*"And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said*

*unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments,*

**Proper questions are deserving of proper answers! Thus the Spirit does not leave the answer up to men. Rather He tutors us in how to answer, knowing that faith will at once recognize the validity of the response and derive help from it.**

*and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment"* (Zech 3:1-4).

There you have it! A charge sought to be leveled against someone serving the Lord. Other versions say Satan was at Joshua's right hand "to accuse him." <sup>NASB,NIV</sup> The situation was even complicated by the fact that Joshua was "clothed with filthy garments." Surely this is a case where a valid accusation can be made. The most crafty of all enemies is

set to make it. The person against whom it is to be leveled has no righteousness of his own.

Satan does not get a chance to raise the accusation. Although Joshua was standing before the angel of the Lord, the Lord Himself intervenes. He does not rebuke Joshua for having filthy garments, but Satan for seeking to accuse him. Joshua is a "brand plucked from the fire," and God will allow no accusation to be made against him!

But that was not the end of the matter. God said to those standing by Joshua, "Take away the filthy garments from him." He then informed Joshua what had happened. "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." See, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

### GOD'S ELECT

The "elect" are the ones God foreknew, predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, called, and justified. Furthermore, He has also determined to glorify them. In fact, that is His predetermined and unalterable purpose. Now, who will lay anything to the charge of these "elect."

These are not people who elected God. God elected them. They are "God's elect," God is not their elect! It is true that they know God. It is "rather" true that they are known by God (Gal 4:9). They are called "the elect" – that is one of the terms by which they are known. Jesus called them "the elect" (Mk 13:22). Paul called them "the elect" (Col 3:12; 1 Tim 5:21). John called them "the elect" (2 John 1). The church is "elected" (1 Pet 5:13). God's purpose stands "according to election" (Rom 9:11). There is an "election of grace" (Rom 11:5). Even though great masses of Israel were cut off from salvation, "the election hath obtained it" (Rom 11:7). The "election of God" can be known (1 Thess 1:4). It is our business to give diligence to make our "calling and election sure" (2 Pet 1:10).

Now, who is going to level a successful charge against a people so identified? Furthermore, what would move people to resist such an appellation—"God's elect?" To "elect" is to choose or select. No person should question there are people God has chosen, or selected. In fact, the saints are called a "chosen generation" (1 Pet 2:9). Believers are emphatically told, "He has chosen us in Him" (Eph 1:4). Those identified with Jesus "are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14). Who is there that can raise a charge against these people? Who can burst before God and accuse His "elect"?

By this, He means that the debt incurred by sin has been fully paid, and the complete penalty exacted at the hands of Christ Jesus. He was "made a curse for us," enduring the judgment of God, and treading the winepress of the wrath of God alone

**GOD JUSTIFIES**

The inability to accuse these people is not owing to a law that has been issued against doing so. It is not that accusations are illegal. When God justifies people, there simply is nothing that can be found against them! They may be wearing filthy garments because of an untrained and guilty conscience, but they have been plucked from the fire of condemnation, and no record of transgression can be found against them.

Micah said God would "subdue" the "iniquities" of the people, and "cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). By this he means they cannot be accessed. They are beyond the reach of the accuser!

Isaiah foretold the coming age of grace when God spoke through him, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isa 44:22). They no longer exist! They have been "removed" from us as "far as the East is from the West," and can no longer be joined to us (Psa 103:12).

That is the state of those whom God has justified. No one can lay an accusation against them and make it stick! Eventually, before an assembled universe, all accusations against them will be thrown down. In it God will be vindicated in the purity of His people.

**EVERY NEED IS ADDRESSED**

<sup>34</sup> **Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.** The climax to this lofty argument is marvelous. Truth soars like a mighty eagle into the heavenly realms, summoning faith to follow. This chapter began with the words, "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). Now the Spirit hurls the challenge in the face of the adversary, and into the conscience of the believer as well. He is going to confirm that salvation has, indeed, been established as protective "walls and bulwarks" (Isa

26:1).

**HE WHO CONDEMNS**

Who is the one who will condemn God's justified ones? If there really is "no condemnation," do not those who seek to censure God's people do so in vain? Because Goliath charged David with coming to him with sticks, cursed him by his gods, and condemned him to be eaten by the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, does that make it do? Can Nebuchadnezzar really condemn Daniel to be consumed in a den of lions? Or the three Hebrew children in a furnace of fire? If God is for them, can the enemies of God really pass judgment against them?

To condemn is to judge against, or pass sentence against because of some injustice. The person who seeks to condemn God's people attempts to pass a lasting sentence against them. That people make such attempts cannot be denied. The Sanhedrin condemned Stephen. Herod condemned James. Antipas, faithful martyr of Jesus, was condemned by his enemies. But know this, none of that condemnation will stand the test of the judgement seat of Christ. It will not survive the confrontation of the throne of Almighty God! God will reverse all of those condemnations made by his enemies, and

his saints will “judge the world,” setting the record straight (1 Cor 6:2).

#### CHRIST WHO DIED

The Spirit now reasons with us, confirming it is impossible to condemn someone God has justified. First, “It is Christ who died.” By this, He means that the debt incurred by sin has been fully paid, and the complete penalty exacted at the hands of Christ Jesus. He was “made a curse for us,” enduring the judgment of God, and treading the winepress of the wrath of God alone (Gal 3:13; Isa 63:3). No one can condemn those who have been buried into the death of Christ! Christ’s death becomes their death also.

Even when our conscience condemns us because of our past, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14). There is “no condemnation” to those who are in Christ Jesus!

#### FURTHERMORE IS RISEN

The work of Christ did not end at His death. “It is finished” John 19:30) referred to His death, not His work! I prefer the reading of the KJV—“yea, rather.” That is a more proper rendering of the word **mallon**, which means “very much, exceedingly, as a high point, more, and to a greater degree.” The idea is that if Christ’s death wrought such great things, what will be brought by His resurrection! He was “crucified through weakness” (2 Cor 13:4), being brought to His weakest point.

The “power of His resurrection” will now work even greater effects than His atoning death. As it is written, “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been

to it by God Himself (Heb 3:1-2). Christ’s intercessory work is not merely keeping us from being condemned – that issue was settled by His death. We were reconciled by His death (Rom 5:10). His intercession is the means by which we are

**If no one can condemn us because Christ died, surely no one can condemn us now that He has risen from the dead and representing us in heaven!**

reconciled, will we be saved by his life”<sup>NRSV</sup> (Rom 5:10). If no one can condemn us because Christ died, surely no one can condemn us now that He has risen from the dead and representing us in heaven!

#### EVEN AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND

Behold how truth soars to lofty realms! Not only did Christ die, and was even more raised from the dead, He “is at the right hand of God,” where all final judgments are made, and from which all blessings are issued. He is not merely there for Himself, He is there for us! When the Father beholds the Son, He thinks of us, for we are some of His “many brethren.”

#### ALSO MAKING INTERCESSION

Jesus is not idle at the Father’s right hand. He “ever lives to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25). His intercession is not a mere attempt to speak for us, it is an effective intercession. This is His High Priestly work, and He has been appointed

sustained. This is the appointed way of getting supplies to us—“every good and perfect gift.” In His intercessory work He manages our trials, ensuring that none of them exceeds our ability (1 Cor 10:13). Angels are dispatched to protect us (Heb 1:13-14), and the Holy Spirit is sent by Him to minister to us.

No one can condemn the people of God because every provision required for their calling, justification, and glorification has been supplied in Christ. Nothing is lacking, therefore none can effectively accuse or condemn them. Praise the Lord! Additionally, He that is in them is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). Child of God, lift up your head! God is for you! Jesus is for you! The Spirit is for you! The holy angels are for you! Everything is being worked together for your ultimate good. They that are for us are more and greater than they who are against us. Be strong! Be strong! Lift up those feeble hands!

## CONCLUSION

The passage we have just reviewed is to Scripture what the Holy of holies was

to the tabernacle. Though brief in words, it is abundant with sanctifying truth. It

**The passage we have just reviewed is to Scripture what the Holy of holies was to the tabernacle. Though brief in words, it is abundant with sanctifying truth. It helps us to not only make sense out of our sufferings, but endure them to the glory of God. In salvation nothing is left to chance. Everything is in the hand of God, who has appointed Jesus as the Arbiter of every facet of salvation.**

helps us to not only make sense out of our sufferings, but endure them to the glory of God. In salvation nothing is left to chance. Everything is in the hand of God, who has appointed Jesus as the Arbiter of every facet of salvation. As with all pivotal or central proclamations, men have chosen to argue and debate over this text. Such great confusion has been generated by these controversies that unskillful preachers have chosen to

ignore the text, withholding this precious and refreshing elixir from the saints. The results have been devastating. The confidence, boldness, and joy that can be ministered by the persuasion of these things can hardly be found among professed believers. Thousands of churches exist in which hardly a single person can be found that is being noticeably conformed to the image of God's Son. There is scarcely a spark of understanding that even sees such a conformity as necessary, much less predestinated.

Theological schools have elected to put their accent on other things – and what a conglomeration of things they are! They range from developing happy

families and smooth running institutions, to resolving domestic difficulties and revising the music of the church. Those who are seemingly more astute give themselves to critiquing the Bible, providing such valuable information as what books and texts do or do not belong in the Bible. They can even develop a theological template through which we can read the Bible, just to ensure we come to the same deceptive conclusions they have.

All of this may seem quite innocent, but it is not. The weak and emaciated churches that clutter the landscape of the Christian world are the direct result of their leadership. Blind guides have led them, and they have all fallen into the

ditch. This is precisely why such a high level of Scriptural illiteracy exists in the churches. It is why the people stumble through life without a strong confidence, knowing whom they have believed, and being persuaded He is able to keep what they have committed unto Him until "that day." I do not mean to be overly critical, but the serious of the situation demands that strong words be spoken. Jesus is not honored by such conditions. They betray a high level of unbelief.

This passage will give great assistance in resolving these unfortunate difficulties. It is to be faithfully and powerfully proclaimed in faith. It has been given to the children of God for sustenance and encouragement.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/9/2001. Continuing in our overview of the book of Romans, we will be covering verses 35-39 of the eighth chapter. The theme will be, "**GOD'S EVERLASTING LOVE.**" Believers are given strong arguments for maintaining their confidence. That confidence will compel them to fight the good fight of faith, remaining constant in their faith in and commitment to their Savior. Few passages proclaim the keeping power of God as powerfully as the one we will be covering. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>