

Title:           **GOD’S GREAT PURPOSE OF GRACE**  
Text:           Romans 8:28-30  
Subject:       *The Grace of God Given In Eternity*  
Introduction:

Nicolai Alexandrenko was a Russian paratrooper during World War II. Being a staunch Communist, raised under the tyranny of Joseph Stalin, he had been taught from a child that there is no God. He was an atheist.

When the Germans invaded Russia he was sent to defend his homeland. Lt. Alexandrenko and the men under his command were gunned down by German machine guns before they hit the ground. As the bullets pierced his body he realized death was imminent. He saw the men under his command slaughtered. Even then he clung to his fatalistic, atheistic philosophy. In intense pain he did not shed a tear. In fact, he didn’t even cry when his mother died.

He was taken to the infirmary patched up and left to die. But he didn’t die. He gradually recovered from his injuries. Later, he found himself in the barracks alone in freezing cold of Russian winter, trying to light a fire with a piece of paper that would not burn.

As he started to through the paper down in disgust, something caught his eye. He began to read what was written on the paper. He had never seen anything like it before. It was a gospel tract. The first words he read were, — *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

He continued to read these amazing words and other Scriptures and comments printed on the tract. There in the coldness of that bitter night Nicolai Alexandrenko bowed his head, with tears flowing from his eyes and called upon the name of Christ. He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He

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Grace Baptist Church Dingess, WV — (FRI - PM – 09/29/06)

Tape #    Y-23a

Reading: *Romans 8:1-39*

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later made his way to the United States and earned his degree in theology at New Orleans Baptist Seminary.

I could tell you many such stories.

- The Young Men who Came to Jeer Whitefield
- The Nigerian Runner
- The Jogger in New Castle, Australia

Truly, “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform!” How amazing, how marvellous his grace is! We are all intrigued by such stories. We all think, “That is wonderful.” Let me remind you of something we tend to forget, our God has done the same thing in the lives of every person here who has been saved by his marvellous, free grace in Christ.

He causes everything to “*work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” That is my subject — **GOD'S GREAT PURPOSE OF GRACE**. You will find my text in Romans 8:28-30.

(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

## **GOD OF PURPOSE**

Contrary to popular opinion, the God of this Book, the one true and living God is a God of purpose (Isa. 14:24-27).

(Isaiah 14:24-27) “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand: (25) That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. (26) This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this *is* the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. (27) For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it*? and his

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hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

Everything in this world comes to pass and is ruled according to the sovereign, eternal, unalterable, all-inclusive, and sure purpose of our God for the salvation of his elect (Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). It is written, — “*Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed*” (Jer. 51:29), “*that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*” (Rom. 9:11). The purpose of God is absolute and unconditional.

### GRACE UNCONDITIONAL

As the purpose of God is absolute and unconditional, the grace of God by which we are saved is also absolute and unconditional. The Scriptures are crystal clear in stating this. Nowhere in the Sacred Volume is salvation ever attributed to, conditioned upon, or determined by man’s works, man’s will, man’s choice, or man’s decision. Every aspect of salvation is specifically declared to be the work of God alone (John 1:12-13; Rom. 9:11-18).

(John 1:12-13) “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

(Romans 9:11-18) “(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have* mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

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Grace is never spoken of in the Bible as God's response to man's choice, but just the opposite. According to this Book the believer's faith in Christ is the result of God's eternal choice of his people in Christ. Grace is not conditioned upon something in us. Grace cannot be earned, won, merited, or even attracted or influenced by us in any way. Grace is "unmerited favor." Grace is God's sovereign, eternal, and free favor toward sinners who fully deserve his wrath.

### ROMANS 8

Were I to choose one passage of Holy Scripture that spells out God's grace most clearly, one passage that identifies and defines God's sovereign purpose of grace in Christ, it would be Romans chapter 8. In this eighth chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration, plainly declares what God has done for chosen sinners in Christ and why he has done it. Look, once more, at what our great God has done for us by his great grace in Christ, our great Savior.

1. He has freed us from all condemnation (vv. 1-4).
2. He has given us his Spirit, the Spirit of adoption (vv. 15-16).
3. Grace has made us heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (v. 17).
4. Grace gives us hope of the resurrection (vv. 23-25).
5. And God has given us the knowledge and assurance of his wise and good providence (v. 28).

But, why? Why has the holy Lord God done all these things for us? What is the basis of his gracious operations? What is the source from which we have all these blessings, privileges, and benefits of grace?

**Proposition:** All the blessings, privileges, and benefits of grace flow to us from and were infallibly secured to us by God's eternal purpose of grace, according to which he created, rules, and shall dispose of the universe (vv. 28-30).

(Romans 8:28-30) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also

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justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Let's focus our attention on verses 29 and 30. In these two verses we have the Holy Spirit's own commentary on verse 28. Here he explains to us what is meant by those words “*according to his purpose.*” Our experience of salvation in time is the result of God's accomplishment of our salvation in eternity “*according to his purpose.*” Let's look at these two verses line by line and word by word. May God the Holy Spirit, whose words these are, teach us their meaning, write them upon our hearts, and use them to inspire worship and adoration for God our Savior, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

### **FOREKNOWLEDGE**

*“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For (because) whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...”*

Be sure you do not fail to observe that every verb in these two verses is in the past tense. The tense in the Greek is called “aorist.” That is very important. The aorist tense of the Greek language indicates “a past action without further limitation or implication.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is telling us here that everything described in these two verses was done, finished, accomplished in the eternal purpose of God.

- I. **The first thing mentioned in verse 29 is God's foreknowledge of his elect from eternity.** — “*Whom he did foreknow.*”

The word “*foreknow*” is προγνω (proegno) from προγινωσκω (proginosko). The noun form of the verb translated “*foreknow*” is the word from which we get our word “prognosis.” You all know what a prognosis is. In the language of medicine a doctor first makes a diagnosis of a patient's illness. Then he gives a prognosis, telling what course the disease is likely to take.

But with God foreknowledge is much more than a prognosis! With God there are no unexplainable turns for the worse. And God's foreknowledge is much more than prescience, or knowledge beforehand of what we would be or do.

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The counsel and decree and purpose of God did not depend upon what we would be, or do, or will! God's Purpose and the fulfillment of it is not the result of him foreknowing that we would believe on Christ. In the Bible foreknowledge means much, much more than knowledge beforehand.

### PEOPLE, NOT THINGS

In the Word of God, God's foreknowledge is not a foreknowledge of things, but of people. The Scriptures never speak of *what* God foreknew, but *whom* he foreknew. God's foreknowledge is not to be confused with his omniscience. Omniscience is a divine attribute. Foreknowledge is a divine act. As it is spoken of and revealed in Holy Scripture, God's foreknowledge implies **FOUR THINGS**.

A. God's foreknowledge is his act and decree of **FOREORDINATION**.

Doesn't Peter tell us that we are "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*" (1 Pet. 1:2)? He does indeed.

Babbling free-willers jump on that passage and our text in Romans 8:30 and spit it at you with a snarl. – "There, you see, election was God's choice of us based upon his foreknowledge of our faith in him. He chose us because he foreknew we would choose him!" Obviously that is not what the text teaches. That blasphemy would make God's choice dependent upon our choice and would run in the face of all the rest of divine revelation. Let no one trip you up with God's foreknowledge. Election is a matter of God's pure, free, sovereign, eternal grace in Christ.

We are not left to guess and speculate about this. The very same Greek word which is translated "*foreknowledge*" in Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2 is translated "*foreordained*" in 1 Peter 1:20.

(1 Peter 1:20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

Foreknowledge includes both determination and control. The Lord Jesus Christ, "*as a Lamb without blemish and without spot...verily was foreordained (foreknown) before the foundation of the world, but was*

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*manifested in these last times for you.”* On the Day of Pentecost Peter said exactly the same thing about the death of our Savior (Acts 2:23).

(Acts 2:23) “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:”

The Son of God was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God the Father; and we are his people by that same determinate counsel and foreknowledge.

B. God’s foreknowledge of his elect is his **EVERLASTING LOVE** for us in Christ.

God’s foreknowledge is of people, not of things. Our text reads, “*whom he did foreknow,*” not “what he did foreknow.” It is his everlasting love for his elect.

**Jeremiah 31:3** The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying,* Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

**John 17:23** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

God knew his elect from eternity as he knew no one else. He knew us in Christ with love and affection, took infinite delight and pleasure in us, and found satisfaction with us. God’s foreknowledge is his special, distinguishing love for his own elect from eternity.

- “*Adam knew his wife Eve*” (gen. 4:1).
- “*I never knew you*” (Matt. 7:23).

C. Divine foreknowledge is **DIVINE APPROVAL.**

**Psalms 1:6** For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

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The Lord God owns and approves of the way of the righteous. When the Lord Jesus says, “*I know my sheep,*” he is saying “I own and approve of my sheep as mine; and he did so from eternity (Eph. 1:6).

**Ephesians 1:6** To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

D. God’s foreknowledge of us is our **INFALLIBLE SAFETY AND SECURITY** in Christ.

**2 Timothy 2:19** Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Think of it — If you are a child of God, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you were known of God from eternity, loved, chosen, owned, approved of, accepted, and secured in Christ according to his eternal purpose of grace! You are one of those “*whom he did foreknow!*” We who believe God, all who have experienced his free, saving grace in Christ, rejoice in and give thanks to God for that blessed foreknowledge which is our election. How I thank God for electing love!

“‘Tis not that I did choose Thee,  
For, Lord, that could not be.  
This heart would still refuse Thee,  
Hadst Thou not chosen me.  
My heart owns none before Thee,  
For Thy rich grace I thirst,  
This knowing — If I love Thee,  
Thou must have loved me first!

## **PREDESTINATION**

Go back to Romans 8:29-30. — “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*”

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- II. **The second word in our text is “predestinate.”** — “*Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*”

Don't be afraid of predestination; and don't be ashamed of it. We are predestinarians because we believe the Bible, and the doctrine of predestination is a blessed Bible doctrine full of comfort and joy for God's people. Predestination is God's absolute infallible purpose of grace regarding his elect, whom he foreknew. Our eternal destiny (perfect, glorious conformity to Christ) was fixed and settled by our heavenly Father before he made the worlds (Eph. 1:3-6, 11; 3:11-12).

(Ephesians 1:3-6) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

(Ephesians 1:11) “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

(Ephesians 3:11-12) “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (12) In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

- A. **Those whom God foreknew in electing love he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

When God made Adam he saw that it was not good for him to be alone. So he made Eve “*an help meet for him.*” And the Lord God determined from eternity that it was not good for his Son (the last Adam) to be alone. So he chose to save a great multitude of sinners and make them just like his Son, a bride for him, a help meet for him. God looked upon his darling Son with such satisfaction and delight that he determined to have many sons just like him (1 John 3:1-2).

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(1 John 3:1-2) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

Our salvation, when it is finished in resurrection glory, shall be our conformity to Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the express image of the triune God; and God's elect have been predestined to be the express image of Christ. This conformity to Christ is threefold.

1. **A Climactic Conformity** — In the new birth Christ is formed in us, we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).
2. **A Gradual Conformity** — We are conformed to the image of Christ in our day by day experience of his grace, as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior.

By the power of his Holy Spirit dwelling in us, by the power of his Word working in us, and by the loving nurture and discipline of our heavenly Father, the lives of God's saints are molded to Christ.

This conformity of God's elect to Christ is not something we perceive in ourselves. As we grow in grace, we grow into a truer and truer realization that we are the very chief of sinners. Yet, the believer's conformity to Christ is real. We are, by the operations of God's grace working in us made submissive to the will of God, though we repent of our rebellions against it. We are made patient in suffering, though we confess our horrible Impatience. We are made to believe God more fully, while we weep over our unbelief. We are made to love our God and our brethren more completely, while our hearts break over our lack of love. We are made more gracious and forgiving, while we repent of our hardness and reluctance to forgive offenses.

3. **A Consummate Conformity** — Soon, O blessed thought! Soon, we shall be perfectly conformed to our Lord Jesus Christ in the resurrection.

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In divine, sovereign predestination God eternally and immutably determined who he would save, how he would save them, when he would save them, and where he would save them. Then he arranged everything necessary to accomplish their salvation and to bring them to glory at last, perfectly conformed to the image of his dear Son.

Predestination marked the house into which grace would come, paved the road by which grace would travel to that house, set the time when grace would enter the house, and guaranteed that grace would actually enter the house at the appointed time of love. Nothing was left to chance, luck, blind fate, or man's imaginary free-will!

B. **God's great design in predestination is the glory and honor of his dear Son as our Mediator and Savior.** — *“That he might be the firstborn among many brethren!”*

In predestination, as in all other things, Christ has the pre-eminence. He is the Firstborn Son in the family of God.

1. **The firstborn is the first to be born. Christ is the firstborn both as God and as man.**

- He is God, the eternal Son, eternally begotten of the Father.
- He is the Man of Redemption, brought forth by the divine decree in the covenant of grace (*“Let us make man in our image”* Gen. 1:26; Pro. 8:22-26, 30).

(Proverbs 8:22-26) “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. (23) I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (24) When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. (25) Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: (26) While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.”

(Proverbs 8:30) “Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him;”

2. **The firstborn son is the one in whom the whole family is dedicated to God** (Ex. 13:2).

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(Exodus 13:2) “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine.”

3. **The firstborn son is the head of the family after the father** (Deut. 21:17).

(Deuteronomy 21:17) “But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.”

4. **The firstborn son holds and manages all the property of the family in the name of the father.** It is “*the right of the firstborn.*” (See Heb. 6:20).

5. **It is in the firstborn son that the name and family of the dead is raised up and lives** (Deut. 25:5-6).

(Deuteronomy 25:5-6) “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. (6) And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.”

- C. Notice this too — **God has predestined many to be sons in the family of grace.** — Christ shall be “*the firstborn among many brethren.*”

At any time in history, and at any given place, God’s elect appear to be few. To all outward appearance, it may be said, “*Few are chosen.*” But God’s few are many in the end. When they are all gathered into heaven, God’s saints shall be a vast, vast multitude that no man can number (Rev. 5:11; 7:9).

“Vast beyond imagination  
Is the host of God’s election:  
More than all the sands of oceans —

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More than all the stars of heaven!

Here they seem a small assembly,  
Weak, and poor, and ever needy;  
But when all are brought to heaven,  
What a mighty congregation!

Mighty, through the Lamb they conquer!  
Lord, let me be in that number!  
Fixed in Your predestination,  
Savior, grant me Your salvation!"

That is predestination. — God has determined from eternity to save a great multitude of sinners for the glory of Christ. Let us never cease to be amazed at God's grace toward us. It is amazing that he should save any, more amazing that he should save many, and infinitely amazing that you and I should be numbered among that many!

**CALLED**

III. **The third word in our text is "called."** — *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. **Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called:** and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

I remind you of the tense of these verbs. They are all past tense verbs. They are all in the aorist tense. The Holy Spirit is not talking to us about what God shall do in time, but about what God has done in eternity, in his purpose of grace, according to which he rules the world. He is talking about something done, once and for all with finality in eternity, with no other implication.

**God declares that done which he is going to do. Then he does it** (Isa. 46:9-10). He declares it done and then does it.

(Isaiah 46:9-10) "Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I

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will do all my pleasure:”

In Romans 8:28 Paul tells us that God rules the universe according to his purpose of grace. In verse 29 he tells us that God’s purpose of grace is the absolute, complete salvation of his elect, the conformity of all he loves with an everlasting love to Christ. That is what he is going to do. Now, in verse 30, he tells us that it is done. We have not experienced it all yet, but it is done. Nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken from it. It is done, and done forever, from eternity (Ecc. 3:14).

(Ecclesiastes 3:14) “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him.”

This text is not talking about the general call that is issued to sinners to come to Christ every time the gospel is preached. And it is not talking about the effectual, irresistible call of the Holy Spirit in omnipotent grace by which God’s elect are brought to Christ in faith. Those who are “*the called*” in verse 28 are those who are separated and distinguished from all others by the saving operations of God’s grace in time. But that is not what is spoken of in verse 30. This text is talking about a call made by God almighty in his eternal decree.

What can that be? Let the Scriptures answer for themselves. Before the world began God saved and called his elect with a calling of grace given us in Christ from eternity (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) “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, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

The word that is translated “*called*” in Romans 8:28, κλητοῖν (klaytos), means “invited, summoned, or selected.” But that is not the word used in Romans 8:30 and 2 Timothy 1:9. The word translated “called,” εκαλεσεν (ekalesen) from καλεω (kaleo), in these verses means “named, made to bear a name, or saluted by a name.”

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**In old eternity the Lord God called all his elect the sons of God, and named us as his sons** (1 John 3:1-2). As such, we were sanctified, set apart from all others and made holy by the eternal decree of God. Being sanctified by the Father's decree, we were preserved in Christ through all the ages of time unto the appointed time of our calling. At the appointed time of love we were called to life and faith in Christ by his almighty grace (Jude 1).

(1 John 3:1-2) "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

(Jude 1:1) "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called."

### JUSTIFIED

IV. **The fourth word in our text is "justified."** — *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and **whom he called, them he also justified:** and whom he justified, them he also glorified."*

Being called the sons of God in the eternal decree of God, we were justified in Christ then, in God's eternal decree. Let me camp here for a few minutes. All who were called were, at the same time, by the same decree, justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption of Christ's blood as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. We were declared just with God, absolved of all sin and guilt, forgiven of all iniquity, made righteous by divine imputation, and accepted as perfectly righteous in the Beloved, in Christ our Surety before God spoke the world into being!

**Try to get hold of Paul's doctrine if you can.** If this won't put a "Hallelujah" in your soul, I don't know what will. — When the Lord God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, he called us his sons and justified us in his eternal decree, looking on us in his dear Son!

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- Our sins were canceled before they were committed!
- Our debt was paid before it was incurred!
- The curse was removed before it came!
- The law was mended before it was broken!
- Justice was satisfied before it was offended!
- We were justified in Christ before we were fallen in Adam!
- We were accepted in Christ before we were banished in Adam!

**Yes, redemption was done when God looked upon Christ as our Surety and accepted his sacrifice as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.** Hear what God says concerning the matter (Isa. 53:4-10).

(Isaiah 53:4-10) “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

**Without question there is a sense in which our justification by the grace of God is an eternal act. This is not just a logical inference drawn from the Scriptures. It is a doctrine plainly taught in the Word of God. In Romans 8:30 Paul is talking about the eternal purpose of God by which he rules all things in providence. His subject matter is not prophetic, but historic. In the purpose of God all his elect were justified from eternity in Christ.**

## GOD'S GREAT PURPOSE OF GRACE

- A. **We were “accepted in the Beloved”** (Eph. 1:6) from everlasting. If we were accepted in him, we were considered righteous in him. If God looked upon us as righteous, he looked upon us as justified. The only righteousness we could have possessed was imputed righteousness.
- B. **Justification is one of those “all spiritual blessings” with which God’s elect were blessed in Christ before the world began** (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:9). The whole package of salvation was given to us in Christ in the covenant of grace before the foundation of the world. “We may say of all spiritual blessings in Christ what is said of Christ, that *his goings forth are from everlasting*” — (Thomas Goodwin).
- C. **Christ became our Surety in the everlasting covenant** (Heb. 7:22). As soon as one man becomes surety for another the other is freed from all obligation and responsibility. Even so, when Christ struck hands with the Father as our Surety, before the worlds were made God said concerning his elect, “*Deliver them from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom!*”
- D. **The Lord Jesus Christ was, in the mind and purpose of God, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”** (Rev. 13:8). If the Father looked upon the Son as the Lamb slain, he looked upon him as the propitiation, atonement, and satisfaction for the sins of his people, and he looked upon us as redeemed and justified by the blood of the Lamb.
- E. **Moreover, all the Old Testament believers were accepted of God and justified upon the basis of Christ’s having fulfilled all righteousness for them from eternity** (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15). They were not justified on credit, merely by a promissory note, but upon the grounds of justice satisfied in the purpose, decree, and word of God. If God justified them upon the basis of this eternal work, before Christ ever came into the world to die as their Substitute, why should anyone dispute the eternity of our justification upon grounds of that same eternal work? We were justified in the purpose of God from eternity!
- F. **Eternal justification no more diminishes the necessity of justification in time than eternal adoption diminishes the necessity for the experience of adoption in time.** All who were justified in the

## **GOD'S GREAT PURPOSE OF GRACE**

purpose of God must and shall be justified by the purchase of Christ's blood and the power of his grace as well.

### **JUSTIFICATION FINISHED**

1. **All of God's elect were justified by the blood of Christ when he died as their Substitute** (Rom. 3:24-26).

When the Son of God cried, "*It is finished*," the work of our justification was fully accomplished in time. When he paid the price of our ransom, we were delivered from the penalty of the law. When he was made to be sin for us, we were made the righteousness of God in him. When he was made a curse for us, we were delivered from the curse of the law. When he was declared to be free from our sins in his resurrection (Rom. 4:25), we were declared to be free from sin!

**Be sure you understand this** — We were made righteous by a marvellous transaction of grace called "imputation". As Christ was made to be sin for us, though he could not and did not sin, by having our sins imputed to him, so we were made to be the righteousness of God in him, though we have not done and can never do anything righteous, by having his righteousness imputed to us (2 Cor. 5:21).

### **JUSTIFICATION RECEIVED**

2. **We receive justification by faith** (Rom. 3:28).

When the Bible talks about justification by faith the teaching is not our that faith is the source, cause, or ground of justification. Faith is the channel through which justification comes, not the cause of it. Faith is the hand that embraces justification, not the hand that accomplishes it!

For example, should you ask, "How do you irrigate your garden?" I would probably say, "By the water hose." But you would know my meaning. The hose is the instrument not the cause of the irrigation. It is only a channel through which water flows to irrigate my garden. The cause of our justification is the grace of God. The ground upon which we are justified is the blood of Christ. The reception of justification is by faith in Jesus Christ. If you trust Christ, you are justified. Your faith in him is the fruit, evidence, and manifestation of justification.

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### GLORIFICATION

V. Look at Romans 8:28-30 one more time. **The last word in the text is “glorified.”**

(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

I can't talk much about this right now, because I do not know much about it. I haven't experienced this part of the text yet. But I hope to know more soon.

This much I know — Glorification is exactly the opposite of condemnation. God removed the guilt of sin from us in justification, and he shall free us from all evil the consequences of sin in glorification.

Our God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son. That shall be accomplished in glorification. God's goal for his elect is absolute and everlasting glorification. His designs of love and grace (Eph. 1:4-6) will have their absolute, full accomplishment in our glorification. Nothing less than our absolute, full, perfect conformity to Christ in glorification will satisfy God's purpose of grace and fulfill his will. In everything he has done, is doing, and shall hereafter do, our glorification is his object.

**But wait. Look at our text. Here the Holy Spirit declares that our glorification, like our calling and justification is something done by God at one time in the eternal past, with no other implication.**

Is our all-glorious Lord Jesus Christ glorified in heaven today? Is he now glorified as our Surety, Mediator, and Savior? Indeed, he is! He is glorified with that glory that he had with the Father as our Surety before the world was (John 17:5). Just as he was glorified as our Surety in the eternal purpose of God, we were glorified in him before the world began, fully, completely, absolutely, by the decree of God. And that eternal glorification

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in the purpose of God guarantees and makes certain our glorification experimentally in the resurrection!

**Application:** Now, I pray that that which the Lord God has done for all his elect in his eternal purpose of grace has been brought to light to some of his lost children by the gospel you have heard today, by the appearing of Christ in your hearts, for Christ's sake.

(2 Corinthians 4:3-6) "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) "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, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Amen.