

Pt 27 Romans 8:29, Dispensationalism, Foreknowledge and Predestination

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Romans 8:29 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.*

We pick up here in Romans Chapter 8 where we left off 4-Sundays ago, by looking at verses 29. There is a lot to cover in these 2 verses and I likely will not get it all covered sufficiently; however, we are going to do our best and rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide us.

There are essentially 2-things I would like for us to cover, and that is:

Foreknowing and Predestination. Both these should have a message all to themselves, but we are going to try and cover this the best we can this morning.

But I also want to preface this message by talking briefly about **Dispensationalism.**

Dispensationalism simply means that over the course of history, God works a certain way with different groups of people over different time periods.

Let me just say: I do consider myself a dispensationalist, but even though I preach out of a Scofield Bible, I do not adhere to C.I. Scofield's 7-Dispensation theories.

And I'm certainly not a hyper or ultra-dispensationalist such E.W Bullinger (although I do enjoy reading his commentaries) but I do not agree with his theory that the Church didn't begin until the end of the Book of Acts and was not revealed until Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Bullinger also had 7-Dispensation theories.

The Hyper-or-Ultra-Dispensationalist essentially believes the whole Bible, except for Paul's writings, is only for the Jew. They believe Paul taught a different Gospel than what is taught in the 4-Gospels. They do not believe the Church as we know it started at Pentecost, but rather it didn't start until Paul's imprisonment in Rome. The hyper-dispensationalists believe people get saved different ways.

The way I see it, there are really only 2 major dispensations:

1. God working through His people the Jews.
2. God working through His church

So, Israel and the Church

You could take that a little further and say God working **before the fall and after the fall and before the Cross and after the Cross.**

If you wanted to get fanatical you could even break that down further and list even more dispensations within those:

1. The creation
2. The fall of man
3. The period before the flood
4. The replenishing of the earth after the flood
5. His work through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
6. His work through the descendants of Jacob (children of Israel and later known as the Jews)
7. The time of the Kings
8. The time of the Judges
9. The time of the Jews captivity
10. Time of the Jews after captivity
11. His work through the Jews leading up to their rejection and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD
12. His work through the Gentiles and the Church
13. His work through the Jews after the rapture of the Church and through their Tribulation

14. His work through all mankind in the Millennial Kingdom
15. His final destruction of all sin, Satan, and the cleansing of the earth
16. Lastly the Revelation of His Son Jesus as Lord of Lord's and King of King's Who rules and reigns forever.

I'm sure you could even break all that down into smaller dispensations.

Regardless of the dispensation, the fact of the matter is – everyone (Jew or Gentile) is saved the same way – by grace through faith and it is made possible by the Lord Jesus Christ. That is taught all through Scripture.

This message isn't really about dispensations, but I wanted to say that as we look at these verses this morning because it deals with some things that many Christians have either never been taught correctly or have never been taught at all.

Now that we got that out of the way, look at our opening text:

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.*

The “**he**” that Paul is talking about is **God** – the Almighty, the Great I Am, the Alpha and Omega. Paul says, “**For whom he did foreknow.**” Let's stop right there and look at our first key word in this text: Foreknow. The definition of **foreknow** is: “**To have knowledge beforehand.**” In other words, knowing something is going to happen before it happens.

It stands to reason that God would know something was going to happen before it happens because he is omniscient (meaning all knowing).

The fact is, God foreknew those that would be conformed to the image of his Son. Lost people are NOT conformed to the image of his Son; therefore, you could say he foreknew those who would be saved. All of this took place before the world was even created. We know this because the Bible tells us this. But his foreknowing isn't only speaking about foreknowing who would be saved but foreknowing that He was going to conform us to the image of his Son.

Listen to these verses: **2 Timothy 1:8-9** Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 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,**

Did you notice it said, “according to his own purpose”? What did we study last time in Romans 8:28? **Romans 8:28** 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.**

It all boils down to God's purpose. It was starting with God's foreknowledge that His purpose began for mankind.

We read it last time but turn over to **Ephesians 1:3-12**

3 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.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

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:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In these verses we read about God's foreknowledge, his predestining, his purpose, his will, and there is even a mention of dispensations. Here it is called the "**dispensation of the fulness of times**," meaning the time period or dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom.

Now, look back again at our opening text in **Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...**

Predestinate is not the same as **Foreknowledge**. Where foreknowledge meant knowing beforehand, predestinate means **deciding or appointing beforehand**. You could even say **pre-determined**.

When it comes to predestination, there are always those out there that say things such as: "**Well, if God predestines someone to be saved and go to heaven then he also predestines some to not be saved and go to hell.**"

Be very careful putting words into God's mouth that He did not say! Nowhere in the Bible do you find a verse stating that God predestines anyone to hell. Every time we read of God's predestination it is always speaking of the work of Christ or eternal salvation or glorification but NEVER is it speaking about condemnation or damnation.

God does not predestine anyone to go to Hell. In fact, the Bible tells us this in **2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

And, what about the most famous Bible verse of all: **John 3:16 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.**

Did it say, "For God so loved the "**elect**," that he gave his only begotten Son?

Did it say "that **if the elect** believeth in him should not perish?

No, no, no, no, no. It says, "For God so loved the WORLD," and WHOSOEVER believeth.

God does not predestine anyone to go to hell, but he will allow you to go there by your own choice. Salvation is open to anyone and everyone. If you go to hell, it's because you rejected the Lord Jesus Christ.

God predetermined that we would be, as it says in the next part of verse 29 "...**conformed to the image of his Son.**" It is amazing to think that before the earth was ever formed, before I was ever born that God already knew me and appointed me to be conformed to the image of His own Son.

The kids used to sing a song "**He's still working on me, to make me what I ought to be.**" I wish I could say I was already completely conformed but I'm not. He's still working on me, I'm a work in progress and listen to what the Bible says in

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

I like how John says it in **1 John 3:2 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.**

So, God will complete that work in us until we are conformed into the image of his Son, just as he predestined it.

But we are not to just sit by and wait for all of this to take place, no, we are to be striving to be more like Christ every day. Paul says **Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.** We should all be pressing toward that mark. A runner has an end in sight, our end is in Christ and there's no stopping until we get there.

As part of the body of Christ (The Church) we are to be perfected. The Bible says this about the Church in **Ephesians 5:26-27 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

Back to the last part of our verse in **Romans 8:29... that he might be the firstborn among many brethren** The he that he is talking about here is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is considered the firstborn of all believers.

Listen to what the Bible says in **Psalms 89:27-29 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. 28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. 29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.**

Throughout the New Testament we see Christ described as the "only begotten", but we also read him being described as:

- Firstborn of every creature – Colossians 1:15
- Firstborn from the dead – Colossians 1:18
- Firstborn of many brethren – Romans 8:29
- Head of the Church of the firstborn – Hebrews 12:23
- His first begotten of God – Hebrews 1:5-6
- First begotten of the dead – Revelation 1:5

It says in our verse that He is "**the firstborn among many brethren.**" It is through our relationship with Christ that we are considered the "brethren." Only saved people are considered "brethren," and it says here "many" brethren. This encompasses all believers from the beginning of time until the glorious reunion in Heaven with Christ.

I really wanted to cover more verses this morning but for time's sake we are going stop here today. Also, with this being homecoming, we are going to do some special singing and then we are going to enjoy a great homecoming meal and celebrate our 2-year anniversary as a Church.