

Romans 6... 7...8

DEVOTIONAL STUDIES FROM THE
MEN'S MORNING FELLOWSHIP

Romans 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.

Romans 8:29 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.

Romans 8:30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Here we encounter, all at once, the Bible doctrines of foreknowledge, election, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. God's predestination is the focus in these particular verses. Paul's basic thought is this: You can expect God's leading in your life because you are **predestined to be conformed into the image of His Son**. In other words, God's plan is for you to come to maturity, to be like Jesus. The indwelling Spirit leads you towards that great purpose.

These doctrines are huge subjects. One commentator said that the library at his theological seminary contained 10,000 books on the single subject of the doctrine of predestination! After centuries of debate, there is no lack of ongoing controversy - even division - regarding foreknowledge, election, predestination and the rest.

- being changed to bring change -
I'll try to simplify things. Some believe that God's predestination determines your election. God's foreknowledge means that, before the foundations of the world, God chose certain people out of all humanity Whom He would definitely save. These are predestined to election. The adherents of this position call it **unconditional election**.

Unconditional election says that your salvation **is not** conditioned at all on your choice or free will but solely on God's sovereignty in selecting you in Christ before creation. Those who hold this view in its many forms are commonly called Calvinists because they follow the system that is based on the writings of the reformer John Calvin. Calvinists are famous for their five point system, represented by the acrostic "**TULIP**" – Total depravity... Unconditional election...

Limited atonement... Irresistible grace... and **P**erseverance of the saints.

Others believe that God's election determines your predestination. God's foreknowledge means that, before the foundations of the world, He foresaw the faith of those out of all humanity who would respond to the Gospel and be saved. These are the elect who are then predestined, *after* they are saved, to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. This is called **conditional election**.

Conditional election says that your salvation **is** conditioned upon your choice and free will. God selected you based on His foreknowledge that you would exercise your free will to choose Jesus Christ in response to the Gospel. Those who hold this view in its many forms are commonly called Arminians after Jacobus Arminius. He was a Calvinist who changed his mind about election while trying to defend Calvinism.

These are the two major views. One emphasizes God's sovereignty; the other emphasizes man's choice and free will. Which is correct?

Neither! Neither is correct because either of them leads you to conclusions that are both extreme and unbiblical.

There are problems with both views. The foreknowledge view that predestination determines election leads many who hold it to speak of what they call a "double" predestination. In other words, God predestined some to election, but most to eternal damnation. The Bible nowhere teaches "double" predestination. There are two *destinations* - Heaven and hell - but not two *predestinations!*

If election is unconditional, then it follows that you must be born-again *before* you can exercise faith; it follows that Jesus Christ *did not* die for the sins of the whole world, but only for the sins of the elect; and it follows that those who are not among the elect are predestined for Hell with no hope of ever responding to the Gospel.

I'm not making this up. In fact, I'm holding back. Ask a Calvinist who are the **whosoever** in John 3:16 that may **believe**, and he will tell you it is limited to the elect, *not* all mankind; ask Him who the **any** are

when Peter says, **God is not willing that any should perish**, and he will tell you it is only the elect, *not* all mankind; ask who the **all** are when Paul writes that Jesus is the **Savior of all men, specially those who believe**, and he will tell you it is the elect from all walks of life, *not* all mankind. Many of the most precious verses in your Bible are re-interpreted to extreme and unbiblical conclusions in order to fit their five-point system.

The foreknowledge view that rests on the foreseen faith of people, on the other hand, doesn't take enough into account that the word **foreknowledge** *does* indicate a decision on the part of God. He was not merely neutral towards people in eternity past.

The Arminian understanding of election as conditional also leads to many extreme and unbiblical conclusions. Arminianism says that we inherit only "pollution" from Adam, *not* a sin nature. Thus you are not a sinner until you consciously and voluntarily sin. Nothing could be more obvious in Scripture than the fact that you inherit a sin nature from Adam and are born in trespasses and sin.

Conditional election seems also to lead men to the conclusion they can constantly forfeit, or 'lose,' their salvation. Thus folks are constantly coming forward to get saved again and again.,

If election is not unconditional... And if it's not conditional... What is it?

There are two preferable alternatives. One says that election is *corporate*. Ephesians 1:4 says that before creation God purposed to select **us**, referring to a group, *not* to individuals. Any individual who identifies with the group by exercising faith in Jesus is comprehended as having been selected **in Him** before creation.

The other alternative doesn't really have a specific name, but it says that election is *concurrent*. It says that the Bible teaches **both** the sovereignty of God and the free will of man, and that **both** are true **concurrently**, or **simultaneously**.

I like this cocurrent view of election because it's the view Jesus held! Jesus said,

John 6:37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Men have a tendency to go to one or the other extreme simply because they cannot fully reconcile in their finite minds how these two seemingly contradictory concepts can simultaneously be true. The Bible reveals both God's sovereignty and man's free will to choose. We therefore believe both, and leave the reconciling to God.

Our position has been to see God as totally Sovereign over your salvation, *and* you as totally able and responsible to receive or reject His salvation. Prior to salvation, the Gospel is to **whosoever will** respond. It is a universal call to all men everywhere, holding them responsible for their decision. After you are saved you see that God was at work all along, that He chose you from before the foundation of the world.

There is a famous illustration of these simultaneous truths. It shows a human being standing before a doorway. On the arch over the doorway is written, "*Whosoever will*," indicating your choice and free will. As the person passes through the doorway and looks back, over the archway is written "*Chosen in Christ*," indicating God's sovereignty.

Back in Romans Eight you see that *predestination* is Paul's focus. Those whom God foreknew in eternity past are **predestined** to be conformed into the image of Jesus. To accomplish this, they are **called, justified, and glorified**.

1. You are **called** by the Gospel
2. You are **justified** by faith in Jesus Christ.
3. You will be **glorified** at the return of Jesus Christ.

God is thus leading you forward, by His indwelling Spirit, to the predestined maturity that is promised to His elect. As it says in verse twenty-nine, Jesus is the **firstborn among many brethren**. You and I are those **brethren**. We will definitely be like Jesus in the end!