Once You Are a Member You Can Know God’s Got You

Romans 8:28-34

Today I will be preaching from the book of Romans chapter 8, verses 28-34, please follow along with me in your Bibles or on the screen.

**Romans 8:28-34 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**28And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. 29For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory.**

**31What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else? 33Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.**

If you joined in during our worship service last week, you will know that I shared from Romans 8:28-30 last week and I emphasized the fact that God has predestined or planned in advance for us to be Christ-like.

But, I think that these verses deserve at least another week of examination. There has been a great deal of blood (figurative and literal) spilled over the interpretation of these verses.

Some believe these verses are all about God’s fore-choosing of those He would save and those who would be destined for destruction. (Double predestination)

Some believe these verses are all about God’s choosing of those whom He would save and His allowance of others to continue in sin and choose for themselves judgment.

And finally, others, like myself believe that these verses were written by Paul to help Christians know that God has had a plan and has provided all of the means for the believer’s safety since the beginning and well into eternity. These verses were not meant to be read as some kind of deterministic path for a few people that God turns the light on for. But instead, for those who believe, for those who have put their trust in Jesus, they are pastoral verses that remind us of the plan God has for those who love Him.

Let’s begin by defining some terms.

**Foreknowledge**—This is the Greek word prognosis, which interestingly enough means fore-thought or pre-arrangement.

In short I would say God had a pre-arrangement before the foundation of the world to offer Jesus for the salvation of those who would sin. And if you have put your trust in Jesus, then you can know that you have been known since before the beginning.

Doctors often give their prognosis. Sometimes it is right and sometimes it is wrong and often times what the patient does has bearing on the prognosis. God on the other hand knows the end from the beginning even while allowing the free choice of the patient.

As A.W. Tozer once wrote:

“God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, in as much as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, “What doest thou?” Man’s will is free because God is sovereign. A God less sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures.”

There are many examples in the Bible of how God foreknew something, but at the same time, left a choice up to human decision. Jeremiah 18 helps shed some light on this concept:

**Jeremiah 18 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**18 The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, 2“Go down to the potter’s shop, and I will speak to you there.” 3So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. 4But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so he crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over.**

**5Then the Lord gave me this message: 6“O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand. 7If I announce that a certain nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed, 8but then that nation renounces its evil ways, I will not destroy it as I had planned. 9And if I announce that I will plant and build up a certain nation or kingdom, 10but then that nation turns to evil and refuses to obey me, I will not bless it as I said I would.**

**11“Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them, ‘This is what the Lord says: I am planning disaster for you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right.’”**

**12But the people replied, “Don’t waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, stubbornly following our own evil desires.”**

Notice that the nation of Israel (and all the other nations) had a real choice to turn from evil and be spared from God’s planned destruction. God’s prognosis for us has something to do with our choices. This was God’s plan for all mankind. In the book of Acts one of Paul’s speeches to a council in Athens went like this:

**Acts 17:22-28 NLT**

**“Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, 23for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.**

**24“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, 25and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. 26From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.**

**27“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. 28For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’**

It was God’s purpose that people would seek after Him and feel their way toward Him and find Him. To me, this clarifies the understanding that Christ died for any and all who would put their faith in Him. But Romans 3:9-12 can throw us off a bit, Paul had written:

**Romans 3:9-12**

**“…should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. 10As the Scriptures say,**

**“No one is righteous—
    not even one.
11No one is truly wise;
    no one is seeking God.
12All have turned away;
    all have become useless.
No one does good,
    not a single one.”**

The context of this scripture is talking about righteousness according to works of the law. Paul was hypothetically asking, “Were Jews more righteous with regard to obeying the law?”

But some read this to literally mean that there is no one who has the ability to seek God. Then they make the jump to say that unless God picked you from the beginning you won’t seek Him or when taken to the logical end of the belief…they didn’t ever have a chance to seek God.

As we have already established, God’s purpose for creating man and placing Him in time and space was His desire for men and women to seek after Him and find Him. God’s prognosis for men and women was that any and all who sought after him and put their faith in Him would be predestined to be conformed into the likeness of Christ. This, fortunately is said in plain language in the text. It says “He chose them to become like His Son.” We will talk more about this as we work through Romans and we talk about what is often described as a “corporate view of election.” In short, according to Leighton Flowers, the corporate view says this:

“Foreknowledge means that God purposed from eternity to love and redeem the human race through Christ (5:8; Jn 3:16). The recipient of God’s foreknowledge or forelove is stated in plural and refers to the church. That is, God’s forelove is primarily for the corporate body of Christ (Eph 1:4; 2:4; 1 Jn 4:19) and includes individuals only as they identify themselves with this corporate body through abiding faith in and union with Christ (Jn 15:1-6; see article on Election and Predestination, p. 1854)”

The Life in the Spirit Study Bible has an excellent illustration of corporate election, it says:

“Concerning election and predestination, we might use the analogy of a great ship on its way to heaven. The ship (the church) is chosen by God to be his very own vessel. Christ is the Captain and Pilot of this ship. All who desire to be a part of this elect ship and its Captain can do so through a living faith in Christ, by which they come on board the ship… Election is always only in union with the Captain and his ship. Predestination tells us about the ship’s destination and what God has prepared *for those “mark in Him by faith” (Eph. 1:13)*. God invites everyone to come aboard the elect ship through faith in Jesus Christ. [Life in the Spirit Study Bible, pp. 1854-1855]”

It is no coincidence that the great Ark that Noah built has been describe as a type of Christ. As the book of Hebrews records:

**Hebrews 11:7 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**7It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.**

That brings us to the invitation or calling part of God’s plan.

Calling—Is transliterated as the Greek Word Klesis (Claysis) which seems to be best defined as “a divine invitation to embrace the salvation of God.”

The Great Physician, in His prognosis for the world, set up the believer’s destination and also decided to invite those who were looking for Him to join in on the journey.

Those who seek Him will find Him (Matthew 7:7), and they will be invited to embrace the true and eternal safety that can be found in Him. But Jesus used the example of those invited to a banquet and He said:

**Matthew 22:14 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**14“For many are called, but few are chosen.”**

Some would say that this means that when people hear the gospel and are invited only those whom God chooses will believe. Again this doesn’t make sense if it was God’s purpose that people would seek after Him and grope for Him and perhaps find Him. This statement of Jesus simply means that though many are invited few will respond positively to His message and be numbered among His people. And for those of us who have believed it feels special, we feel chosen. Have you ever tried out for a team before and felt like you weren’t good enough to make the cut? In fact, it doesn’t matter how good you were at your said sport, in order to make the team you had to be chosen. If we understand that we are bringing none of our own merit to the team tryout then God’s grace moves us to be thankful for His plan and His means to save us.

And the unmerited favor doesn’t stop there. Those who do respond positively to the invitation, will be justified, or as the NLT states it, they will be made right with God.

**Romans 3:21-26**

**21But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.**

**23For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. 24Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.**

Belief and/or trust in Jesus is the sign on the dotted line moment. The scriptures say that “faith comes from hearing.”

What if the YMCA decided that you were chosen for a “special offer.” Hopefully you would look into what they were offering, and as they told you about benefits like pool access, cardio and weight equipment, open gym time, free group exercise classes, free training sessions, and included baby sitting you would be able to decide if you had faith in the plan they set up, according to their foreknowledge.

But even once you signed on the dotted line and they gave you your membership T-shirt, you have to make a day to day decision of whether or not you were going to use all the privileges at your disposal. This is why the apostle Peter wrote:

**2 Peter 1:4-11 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**4And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.**

**5In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.**

**8The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.**

**10So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. 11Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

God’s plan is for our glorification.

Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary says of glorification:

…glorification is the work of God ( [Rom 8:30](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/8-30.html) ). To it believers are called ( [1 Thess 2:12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-thessalonians/2-12.html) ; [1 Peter 5:10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-peter/5-10.html) ), brought ( [Heb 2:10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/hebrews/2-10.html) ), and foreordained ( [1 Cor 2:7](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/2-7.html) ). God both prepares us for glory ( [Rom 9:23](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/9-23.html) ) and prepares glory for us ( [1 Cor 2:9](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/2-9.html) ). It is ours by inheritance ( [Rom 8:17](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/8-17.html) ). At the same time, however, we have our part to play: glorification should be sought ( [Rom 2:7](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/2-7.html) ), and it will be wrought in us through our affliction and suffering ( [Rom 8:17](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/8-17.html) ; [2 Col 4:17](http://www.biblestudytools.com/2-corinthians/4-17.html) ; [2 Tim 2:10-11](https://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=2%20Timothy+2:10-11) ).

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For those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus, we can know that the Way and the means to God’s plan for our life is laid out before us. Jesus, who is the Way, has given us all of the means to live an abundant life. It is ours to either engage in or not.

I don’t know about you but there is something funny about wearing your YMCA member t-shirt and knowing full well you haven’t used the equipment in years.

I’m not saying you aren’t a member, but working out your salvation includes using the club privileges. For Christians that’s things like Bibles, prayer, spending time with each other, giving, serving each other, receiving from each other, spending time thinking on the things of God and helping the weak.

Do you believe in God’s prognosis?

He foreknew us, our brokenness, and our need for Him.

He planned for us to search for Him and grope for Him and find Him.

He purposed to give an invitation to all who sought after Him.

He makes right (justifies) those who answer positively to His invitation.

He cleanses, conforms to Christ, and glorifies those who walk in faith.

I don’t know where you are at spiritually today, but it is my prayer that faith comes from hearing. And I pray that your faith would lead you to believe that God’s plans will not be stopped in your life. Be confident, as Paul goes on to say:

**Romans 8:31-34**

**31What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t he also give us everything else? 33Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.**

So what do you think about these verses in Romans? Are they meant to teach some type of deterministic view of God’s choice of some humans and not others? Or are they meant to bring assurance to those who have put their faith in Jesus and the plans of God?