

ROMANS BIBLE STUDY

Romans 8:26-30

Lesson #23

Introduction

When we began studying this section of verses, chapters 8 & 9, I said that it was part of a group of verses that are so very clear that there's no possibility of misunderstanding what they mean. Chapters 8 and 9 are the source of some of the most hotly debated theological issues of the bible. And it's not because they're vague or unclear, in fact just the opposite, it's because they're so very clear, so obvious and understandable, that it's impossible to miss the meaning of what they're saying. And this is the cause of the contentions, the absolute clarity of the things that Paul says, and the inescapable ramifications of those things. The scriptures are going to say some things in these two chapters that are perhaps contrary to some of our own preconceptions about God, and about man, and about the nature of the relationship between the two.

It's our natural way (meaning unregenerate man) to believe that God weighs the good versus the bad and then judges on the curve to determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell, but when we carefully study the scriptures we find out that this isn't what it teaches at all, even though it seems perfectly right and fair to us. We also probably believe that God provided Jesus as a propitiation for everybody, indiscriminately, as opposed to a specific and predefined group. And if this is what we believe, and it's certainly what's popular today, then the natural assumption is that we all have the innate ability within us to make this choice freely and without restrictions. But the entire weight of this theological perspective rests on a singular assumption. The assumption is that we all have within us the innate capability to desire repentance from sin, and we all have the ability to just decide for ourselves to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. However, if any part of this foundational assumption is wrong then our whole theological perspective fails. By the study of scriptures we learn that this is not God's way at all. Furthermore, we've been taught many things about those who are the chosen of God, and what they should expect as a result of this redemption and adoption, but not everything we've been taught is according to scriptures. What has God truly planned for His children while we're here on this earth? And what about after that time? What do the scriptures really teach us? I've titled this lesson:

Called According to His Purpose

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. Romans 8:26-30 (NASB)

Verses 26-27:

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

These verses speak of a situation that every Christian should relate to very readily. When we have fallen short of the mark, or when we're utterly lost as to what we should say or do, then we go to God in prayer and simply groan, by which I mean we just say Oh God forgive me, strengthen me, give me direction and clarity to know your ways and walk in them, Oh Lord, Oh Lord. Is there any Christian who has not been humbled in His presence and left without words to speak, and just ended up with such groanings? Maybe, but I doubt it, I've been there too many times to think it's an anomaly. In these cases we depend on the Holy Spirit who searches and knows our heart and the heart of God. This seems to happen even more frequently as we mature, because maturity brings the knowledge of God and His sovereign control over and predestination of all things, and we don't know what He has planned so we don't know exactly how or what to pray for. But we are commanded and encouraged to pray, so we are often left with groanings that are too deep for words as we pour our hearts out in love and gratitude to a sovereign God who holds our lives and futures firmly in His own hand.

We are all encouraged, yea even commanded to pray to God and seek His will and His righteousness to be worked out in our lives. We know that it's so easy to get lost in the worldly things, and pray for our own present day prosperity and desires, but real prayer is intended to be our petition to God to know His will, and seek first and foremost His righteousness and His kingdom, and then we can ask for other things if they're not contrary, and we very often receive those things. In fact, our prayers is one of the most prevalent ways God uses to demonstrate His ongoing love and affection for those who love Him and seek His presence. By answering our prayers He shows us that He's willing to hear us, and willing to lavish His grace upon us, when it's in keeping with His overall goals of righteousness and maturity for us.

But sometimes what's good for us in the long run doesn't look like that at all in the immediate. Like a child who's receiving discipline from a parent, it sure doesn't look like something good, but in fact that is the ultimate intention of the parent, and if applied rightly it usually works out for the best. And this is what the next verse is going to start to explain. I've been waiting with both anticipation and with some degree of anxiety to get to these next three verses, because they're among the most revealing and significant words that are written anywhere in the holy scriptures. And I don't feel that I, or any man, is entirely adequate to the task of thoroughly and rightly expressing the full depth and magnitude of the revelation these verses will present. I fear that I won't be able to put into words the enormity of the revelation of these verses, but I'll seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit and proceed to the best of my ability. If we don't understand these next verses then the whole of chapter 9 will be a disturbing and perplexing mystery. But if we do, then we will have a good start on understanding the nature and relationship of God both to His own elect children, and to those who are not His elect, those whose names are not in that Book of Life. Now, lets look at those verses:

Verse 28:

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

I think it might be easier to grasp the meaning if we look at the second half of this verse before the first half. The part that says: *to those who are called according to His purpose*. Understanding that God has a clear purpose, and understanding what that purpose is, would seem to be the most fundamental premise of the Christian community. But you know what, that's just not so, the Christian community has all sorts of ideas as to what God's purpose is, and how He's accomplishing it in our own lifetimes. We'll be examining that very thing in the next verse, but for now we must understand that God has a specific purpose that He began with before creation and, this verse tells us that everything that happens in this time that we live on this earth, will work out for the eventual good of all those who love God.

It's amazing how we twist this verse. There is no shortage of false teachers suggesting that this verse means that only good things will happen during the lives of those who love God. So they teach health, and wealth, and prosperity and use these verses and others to back up their claims. But all one has to do is look at the One whom God loves above all others, at the One whom He has set above all creation, His only begotten Son, and examine what He experienced during His life on this earth. What were the circumstances that God used, literally caused, to work out for His good? What was good for Jesus? Well, lets see, was He wealthy and prosperous?

Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests , but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* (Mat 8:20) It would appear that what God felt was good for His Son Jesus was to be a homeless nomad, roaming the lands and sleeping on the ground.

Okay, so was He famous and revered and loved by all during His time on earth? What did He himself say:

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 22 "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 "He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 25 "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.

John 15:18-25

So then, did He finally conquer those wretched enemies while He was here on this earth, and prevail over them?

15 So they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said* to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (Jn 19:15) Quite the contrary, *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.* (Jn 1:11) And so was the life and times of the only begotten Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember now that we recall these reference verses that we've just read within in the broader context of the verse we're studying now, that clearly says *that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.* So are we to conclude that what happened to Jesus was for good? Yes, a resounding Yes, that's exactly what we are being taught in this and all the scriptures. That our entry into the loving, righteous, eternal, kingdom of God is through much strife, and sacrifice and perseverance. And this difficulty and strife is deliberately caused by God because He has determined that it is the means that will best produce the intended results. God is not a helpless victim of circumstances, nor is He a slave to human free will. He orchestrates and He causes all things in the lives of those who love Him to work out for their final good. I hope we can see the difference between that which is good, in and of itself, and that which works out for good in the long run. Admittedly, these two are not the same thing at all, not even close.

It's a down right shame that there's so many professing Christians that can't seem to make this distinction, and accuse God of ignoring some non-existent promises of safety and prosperity when tragedies and difficulties arise in their lives. Yes, God causes the triumphs, and He causes the tragedies in the lives of those who He loves and who love Him, because all together it works out for our good. How can we read the book of Job and not understand this? How can we read of the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ and not understand this? The crucifixion of Jesus was the most heinous crime, the greatest evil, ever committed by humanity, but in the end it worked out for the greatest good ever performed for humanity and for Jesus Christ himself. And God caused this to happen, He planned it before creation, He didn't just allow it. The Apostle Paul could just as easily have said that God **allows** all things to work together for good, but the Holy Spirit directed him to write that God **causes** all things to work together for good. God's role is not passive, it is active and completely sovereign and predetermined. Jesus knew that He was the Lamb of God, and that His purpose was to be sacrificed according to the predetermined plan and will of God.

The truth is, that difficulties, and hardships are to be expected by those who love God, because it's through these things, that God directly causes, that we are perfected. The Apostle Peter understood this very well, and wrote in his epistle: *6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.* (1Pet 1:6-9) The outcome of a faith that is tried and tested in the fires of life, and by these trials proven true and authentic, is the salvation of our souls, and our entry into the eternal kingdom of God. So says the Apostle Peter.

And James, the half-brother of Jesus wrote this in his epistle:

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jas 1:2-4)

Men and professing preachers are free to say and teach anything they want, but the holy scriptures speak to us with absolute clarity and absolute authority, and what they say is that Christians are made complete and mature, made ready for their place and position in the kingdom of God, by various trials and hardships that were specifically designed and implemented (literally caused) by God himself, and they will, without any doubt, work out for the good of those who love Him, just as it did for His Son Jesus.

This is what we are being taught, and this is something we must understand and accept if we are to benefit from it. God not only allows hardships, He has personally designed them Himself for the purpose of perfecting His chosen children and making them ready for their eternal purpose. So many preachers are afraid to say what the bible teaches, and say instead that God only allows trials and hardships, but the Apostle Paul is saying straight out, in no uncertain terms that God literally causes, not just allows all those things in the lives of those who love Him because it is designed to work out for their good.

This is why James said to consider it all joy when we experience these things. To the unlearned this sounds absurd, but to the educated children of God it is the signs of His working in our lives for our ultimate good. So every test and every trial should be seen as a step closer to our final completion and preparation, so James can say, with absolute honesty, to consider it all joy if we understand what's really happening on the larger cosmic scale of eternity. And that's because, now [we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.](#) We will see, as we continue to study these verses, that God has a specific purpose of His own for the creation of all things and all beings, and that purpose is for His benefit and His desire. Creation is not a story that is primarily about man, it is a revelation about God and His ultimate purpose for man and all other created things. These verses will explain this very clearly as we continue this study.

So now, do we really understand what Paul is telling us, framed in the proper context, and what it means in our day to day lives? I hope we do, because this is so encouraging and so helpful to every child of God who wonders why life has dealt them such a difficult hand, and begun to doubt that God really loves them and cares about their situation. If we love God, then He is using everything in our lives to mold and shape us into what He has predestined that we shall be. And just exactly what is that? What is it that God has predestined from before creation for us to be? We're going to be told precisely that in the next verse. Pay close attention please:

Verse 29:

[29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.](#)

This is a description of God's intended finished product for the human beings that He created and chose to be His own eternal family of worshipers. (Jn 4:23) Everything whatsoever that happens in this created period of linear time, from Genesis to Revelation, has been preplanned and progressively implemented by God himself for the purpose of achieving the end product that this verse describes. In Isaiah 46:9-10 God declares that He is absolutely sovereign, and that He has a plan, and that He will bring that plan to completion with total certainty. This verse, and the next, describes that eternal plan. If we understand this verse, this plan, then we never again have to ask what God is doing in the world today, or what His plan is for us specifically. These two verses answer all of that with certainty and clarity. No, we don't get the minute details, that's been kept a mystery, but we're told what's happening, and why it's happening, and what the end result will be. Therefore we know that all the specific day to day details are a part of that plan of God to achieve His end result, both for the whole world and for us individually. Just like a play writer writes every line, and choreographs every move, before the play ever begins, so God has predetermined every line and every action of His creation from beginning to end.

So now lets start looking at this verse point by point. The first words say: [For those whom He foreknew.](#) What exactly does Paul mean by foreknew? There's at least a couple of ways to interpret this statement. For instance, If it were possible to travel into the future for a day and then return, then we would foreknow the events of that day. This is one possibility, and it's popular among the Arminian proponents. But it's not the only view. Suppose that we had the ability to actually control what happens before it does happen, then we could say that we foreknow the future because we've got a specific plan and we have the power to bring it about. This is also a viable possibility. So which is it? Does God know the future because He can see it, or does He know the future because He literally controls it? Well, based on the verses from Isaiah 46:9-10, and the very next words of this same verse we're studying now, we get an answer. The next words say: [He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.](#) It's not logical, nor grammatically accurate, to declare that someone has predestined something unless he has actually caused it himself. If we only know something then we didn't predestine it, we just knew it. To predestine is to have the ability to make something happen by direct control. Therefore, when the scriptures speak of God's foreknowledge, it's most logical to interpret it as His predetermined intention and direct control. This view holds to the sovereignty of God over all things and all creatures.

Now, having established this as our point of view, lets look further into the opening words regarding [those whom He foreknew.](#) We accept that this foreknowing is speaking about an intentional action of God by which He starts out with a known and predetermined group that He has intentionally selected to do something with, and to serve an intended purpose of His own choosing. It is a specific and known group as opposed to some fluctuating mass, because we are told that God has written their names, individually in a book called the Book of Life, and He did this before He ever created them or the

universe that they will occupy. (Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8, 17:8) These verses just referenced say that the number, as well as the specific names, was known from the beginning, but the individuals themselves appear progressively in time and space spread out over thousands of years of history. Each appears in the time that God has appointed, and each performs their specific part of the overall plan. This is not simply something that God knows, but something that He knows because He's planned it and He controls it. Therefore, the plan cannot fail nor change. And it cannot be delayed or accelerated by so much as one minute. So what does this mean? It means that God has a plan to do something with certain individuals, but not all mankind, that He has known from before creation. Nothing and no one, can prevent this from happening precisely as planned, according to Isaiah 46:9-10.

It's important to understand that God both **has** and **uses** His sovereign right to decide what He does with that which He's created, and this includes plants, animals, and human beings. Some of us do choose Him, but only because He has first chosen us, (Jn 15:16) and only then do we have either the desire or the capacity to choose Him. Do we remember Luke's words describing the general response that Jesus was getting as He preached in the towns and villages? He wrote:

22 And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, 24 "Strive [literally agonize] to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Lk 13:22-24)

Whether we understand it or not, whether we agree with it or not, the scriptures teach unmistakably that not every human being is destined by God to enter His eternal kingdom. And there are a great many more who will not, than those who will. The people of that time recognized that the one's who heard Jesus speak, and saw Him perform miracles, and then responded with authentic belief in Him as the Messiah, and believed that He really was the Son of God were very, very, very few indeed. But this is not a shock or surprise to God, because He has predestined from before creation who will and who will not believe. And He has caused it to be so by His own doings, even though He has done it in such a way that every man is responsible for his own free and voluntary part in rejecting Jesus Christ.

But let's continue with this portion of the verse. The final result, the finished product, that God has predetermined for those whom He has chosen in advance is that they will *become conformed to the image of His Son*. What in the world can this mean? Does it mean that we will all look just like Jesus? Well, no and yes at the same time. The verse says that we will be *conformed* to the image of His Son. The logical conclusion is that we will be conformed to the thinking and behaviors and affections on the inside, and on the outside we will have the same bodily capabilities that Jesus enjoys in His resurrected body. God has declared that Jesus is His beloved Son, and with Him He is well pleased. (Mat 3:17, 17:5) But concerning unregenerate man, God has said all those words that we studied earlier in Chapter 3, verses 10-18.

The second half of this verse expands on the first half. After saying that the end result that God has planned for certain human beings is to conform them to the image of His Son, the verse goes on to say: *so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren*. In other words, it is the whole entire group that God seeks, and has predestined to be His eternal worshipers. How many are there? We don't know, but God does, and He's known since before He created the universe. To be His eternal worshiper we must be just like Jesus, because God will settle for nothing less than perfection in this position. Every member will be conformed individually, and then the entire group that God has chosen will all be just like His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Nothing less will qualify as an eternal worshiper of God. I know that many of my dear brethren think that the whole purpose of God during this time of grace is to see how many people He can save from hell, but that's so very shortsighted. If all we look at is man's perspective then we miss the whole plan of God concerning what He's really doing in this age of grace. Yes, He is saving souls, but He's doing it to begin the work of transformation to Christlikeness in them, and groom them for their final purpose as eternal worshipers of God.

Therefore, what this verse is telling us, is that God has planned from the very beginning to take a small specific group, known individually by name, who are chosen out from among the larger group of all humanity, and through manifold experiences of life and times, carefully conform them into the same nature and heart attitude as His beloved Son Jesus. And why would He want to do that? Isn't one Jesus enough? That's not the point, certainly Jesus is everything the Father desires in His Son, and there is none other like Him in righteousness and holiness and glory, but He is still only one person. But God the Father desires a whole family of individuals, all just like Jesus in their attitudes and behaviors, to be with Him and recognize His glory, and freely worship Him eternally.

He told us this in the gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 23-24, that He wants this specific group to be His worshipers. And this is what He's doing in time and space and circumstances.

This is what God is doing right now, in our time, and has been doing before our time, and will continue to do after our time, until the job is finally complete. Eventually He will have all of His worshipers, and we will be just like Jesus. (Eph 4:11-13; Phi 3:20-21) That is the final culmination of the plan of God, for which He created all things. If you are a chosen child of God, if your name is in His Book of Life, then this conformity to Christlikeness is your mission, your daily job, and your ultimate purpose for existence from God's point of view. So says the Apostle Paul in these verses that we're reading. This is his message, this is his teaching.

If we don't know this, then we're repeatedly wandering around asking ourselves and others "why am I here?" or "what is God's plan for my life?" But those who understand what God's ultimate purpose is, and what He's doing, and perceive their place in that plan, will never again need to be among that group of lost and bewildered souls. No matter what is happening in your life, it is an intentional, preplanned part of the process that God has chosen in advance to eventually bring you into conformity with the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. And I assure you that it won't happen overnight, and it almost certainly won't be painless or easy. In fact, for some it seems downright excessive, until we look at what Jesus endured. He told most of His disciples that eventually they would also drink of the same cup as He did, (Mat 20:23) meaning being killed or crucified, and most of them experienced exactly that.

Okay, Now I'm ready to move on to the next verse, but I can't do that without just a brief recap of what we've learned from this verse we're studying. From this verse we've been shown that God himself has had a goal, a motivating purpose, an intended end result of His very own, for creating time and space, matter and energy, and living creatures, and that goal precedes the actual creation itself. He didn't do it for Angels, He didn't do it for humans, He did it (meaning creation) because He had a personal reason of His very own. The scriptures reveal that this purpose, this personal reason, was to produce a large family of beings that were just like His Son, Jesus, and that family would be His eternal worshipers. (Rm 8:29; Jn 4:23-24) It was for this purpose that God has created all things; to have an extended family of worshipers who will worship Him with a heart attitude of love and gratitude (meaning in spirit) and that family will know Who and what God really is, in His nature and character and power (meaning in truth). The creation story begins with a tangible universe and one human being, but ends with a multitude of human beings who are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and who inhabit an eternal kingdom of perfect holiness and righteousness as perfected worshipers of God. But that same plan also includes a group that will not be among the first group, and will serve another purpose that will be described quite thoroughly in chapter nine.

It is my sincerest hope that all who read or hear this study, grasp this truth and understand it in their heart. If you do, and a year from now, or even many years from now, someone asks you "why did God create the universe" you can immediately, without any hesitation whatsoever answer "He did it to raise up a family of eternal worshipers for Himself." This is the story of God's creation. It is the reason that we exist and the reason that we were created. Everything whatsoever that happens in all of time, from beginning to end, was designed and implemented in advance by God to achieve that end result, as God freely told us in Isaiah 46:9-10. Our next verse will demonstrate precisely this:

Verse 30:

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

When we read this verse we're immediately struck with the obvious change of verb tense. Paul has been primarily speaking of things that are happening presently, but now he very noticeably reverts to things that have already occurred. Why does he do this? Well, this isn't out of the ordinary with literary works. It's used to stress the fact that something that hasn't yet happened in time, has nonetheless been predetermined in advance, and it cannot help but come to pass in its appointed time. The end result is guaranteed because it's built into the very process itself. It's saying that everything that happens, from start to finish, has been predetermined and fixed in time and space and eternity. No deviations are possible because the One who has made the statement is fully capable of assuring the end result without fail. The One making the statement has full, complete, and unimpeded power to accomplish that which He has predetermined to do.

Again we could reference Isaiah 46:9-10. And what is that sequence of events which has been predestined by God himself?

First He predestined certain individuals. This predestination as it's being used here, is not referring to just a nondescript category, like "whosoever will" but to very specific individuals who are known in advance by name. As clearly and repeatedly stated in the scriptures, for instance: Ephesians 1:4, and Revelation 13:8 and 17:8. Understanding who this predestined group is, is key to understanding everything we've been studying in this whole lesson. This verse doesn't really make sense unless the predestined group is a known group. The progressive nature of this verse demands a known group whom God has chosen and set apart from the very beginning.

The verse continues with: *and these whom He predestined, He also called*. What does it mean by the term *He also called*? This is one of the most generalized and misrepresented terms in the scriptures. Remember, this particular calling is referring specifically to *these whom He predestined*. This calling is a calling to a very specific group. First let me state that we freely acknowledge the general calling that Jesus Christ made to all men to come to Him in repentance and faith for forgiveness of sins. To deny this calling would be absurd. But this is not the only calling described in the scriptures. God had to present a general call to all humanity to come to Jesus or they would not be personally responsible for their rejection of Him. (Jn 15:22-24) But at the very same time Jesus also taught, concerning the ability of humanity to come to Him, that man was entirely dependent on a specific drawing (or calling) by God on that specific individual. Remember what Jesus said to His disciples: *44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.* (John 6:44)

This verse says that *No one can come* to Jesus in repentance and faith *unless the Father who sent Me draws him*. What are we supposed to infer from these words? They have to mean something, don't they? What does Jesus mean that *no one can come*? Why can't they come, who or what is stopping them? The answer is that the sin nature that resides in fallen man is not capable of believing, nor does it desire to do so. That's why the scriptures say that fallen man is a slave to sin. There must be a calling, a drawing by God, to do that which man cannot and would not do by himself. The general misunderstanding today of the extent and nature of the fall of man is the main reason we don't understand these verses we're reading now. We vastly underestimate the scope of the damage caused by the fall. Yes, God has issued a general call to come to Jesus, but He knows that man is neither desiring nor capable to do so without His intervention. This seems to cause no small level of shock and outrage among the general population. Some perceive this as being a blemish on God's righteousness and fairness to all. As though God were answerable to the precepts of a creature that He made himself for His own purposes. Does God have the intrinsic right to do whatsoever He pleases with that which He has created out of nothing? I'll leave this debate for chapter nine. But for now we're discussing the specific calling of God on that predestined group of humanity.

Furthermore, even though there is a general call to come to Jesus, at the very same time God has imposed innate restrictions in the hearts of man whereby He himself, through the use of various means, sovereignly controls what each and every individual will freely choose to do. There will be no surprise visitors in the kingdom of God who were not predestined before creation to be there. In fact every individual not only needs the intervention of God for the desire and ability, they need specific permission as well. Consider what Jesus said to His disciples:

63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." John 6:63-65 (NASB)

Salvation is a predetermined and predestined gift of God, given to a specific group who were known to Him from before creation, and the permission and the desire, and the ability to effectually believe unto salvation is predetermined by God, it is not a random choice made by men, anytime they wish, at their discretion. Yes, I know this is what's preached in the majority of pulpits, but it's not what's taught in the scriptures. It is not the gospel according to Jesus or according His disciples. Such a perversion of the gospel demeans the sovereignty of God, diminishes the sacrifice of Jesus, and relegates the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the mere whims of man. Such a gospel makes man god and God man, in so much as control and sovereignty are concerned. There is no such thought presented anywhere in the holy scriptures.

So, we have God predestining a specific group, and then calling that same group with an effectual calling that includes permission, desire, and ability to respond to that call in a saving manner. Now, following this same group, Paul says that those who God predestined, and effectually called, He also justified. Do we see that one of the most significant aspects of this verse is that it clearly confines all these functions to a specified predetermined group, not to a broad nondescript mass of general humanity? For this predestined group to achieve their intended result it was necessary for God to justify each and every one of them. Since He knew their names in advance it's obvious that the atonement of Jesus Christ was specifically for these alone, and again not for a broad nondescript mass of general humanity. Every single soul for which Jesus died will be justified and glorified. And He did not die in vain for anyone. Jesus said that all that the Father had given to Him will come to Him, and He will not loose a single one of them. (Jn 6:37-40, 10:27-30) By the will of God, and by the choice of God, some were of Christ and some were not, and Jesus knew exactly who was who from the very beginning. (Jn 6:64) When He gave up His life on that cross He knew who it was for, and who it was not, and not a single name has, or ever will change. This verse virtually locks that reality into place forever. Yes, Christ did die for all, but the all for which He died is specifically referring to all of the predestined elect of God who are recorded in the Book of Life, certainly not for all of fallen humanity, we know that all humanity is not saved because the scriptures tell us so.

Then we get to that last step in this predestined process that has been recorded in the past tense form, that says that those who were predestined for this from before creation were also effectually called over the course of time, and were entirely justified by the work of Christ Jesus being imputed to our account, and then they were even glorified. Glorified how? Well it doesn't say specifically in this verse, but we have considerable information elsewhere. We are transformed and conformed into the image of Christ in our spirit, and we are granted glorified and imperishable and undefiled physical bodies, but even more, we are granted direct contact with Jesus Christ and entry into the perfect and sinless and eternal kingdom of God himself. We were chosen for, and are allowed to be, His unique human worshipers from among all the humans who were ever born during the earth age. But even so *just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him."* (1 Cor 2:9) It seems that the glorification aspect is probably beyond our grasp at the present time, and so it should be I suppose. This seems right and proper, so we have something to anxiously anticipate along with the joyful return of Jesus Christ himself.

Again I have to point out that one of the most significant aspects of this verse is that it clearly defines and confines the whole work of God to a very specific and predestined group who are first chosen by God, then progressively issued an effectual call to faith, and then justified by the specific work of Jesus Christ on their behalf, and then glorified to be His family of worshipers. This is not speaking of a random and spontaneous group that's somehow growing and changing every hour and every day according to the spontaneous decisions of man. This verse answers a lot of questions and resolves a lot of debates for those who seek the truth, and are willing to consider the possibility that maybe they might have been wrong in their thinking for a very long time. (Myself included in this group)

Conclusion:

I hope we've covered these verses adequately, but the truth is I just don't know until I hear the final recording myself. If it seems to be complete then we'll move on, but if not I'll do a supplemental lesson on the same verses. Time will tell. In the meantime, to Him be the glory. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami
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