

## Romans

### Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:28-30 January 23, 2011

This is lesson number 74 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

#### The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

#### Title: According to His Purpose

##### Romans 8:28-30

**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.**

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

In our last lesson I said that the promise of God in Romans 8:28 is qualified by two phrases that make, “**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,**” apply only to the children of God, those who have been defined in verses 1-27.

In that lesson I said that a person could not correctly understand the Gospel unless he sees that God is a God of **purpose**.

Recently I was grading a Bible study for a prisoner and he wrote that he knew that Romans 8:28-30 said that God has predestined a people, but that he was not ready to accept predestination. My question to him was, “What is it about God being in control of everything offends you?”

When a person understands that God is a God of purpose it will change their theology from being man-centered to being God-centered.

Verse 28 is a summary of verses 1-27, and then;  
Verses 29-30 explain verse 28.

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The promise in Romans 8:28, that “all things work together for good” is qualified and applies only to:

**“those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”**

A person does not know the Gospel or how to present it correctly unless and until that person understands that God is a God of purpose.

What exactly does that mean; that God is a God of purpose?

It means that God is sovereign and absolutely nothing ‘just happens!’

The trial and crucifixion of Jesus was “according to His purpose”.

### Acts 2:22-24

**22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know --23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.**

### Purpose and Predestination.

Let me read a portion of an article by Charles D. Alexander on the “Sufferings of Christ”.

“How then could men be working out a historical drama as it were? And doing these things to the Saviour? Like Judas who betrayed Him and Caiaphas in condemning Him, and the men arresting and binding Him? They were only carrying out the will of God, why should they be blamed? This is the question which often arises, you see the answer is plain but it’s not too simple, and in that God is the ruler of all. He is the great Governor of the nations and of all men, and in God’s government it is proper with God to use evil to punish evil, and to take the evil of men’s heart and make it an instrument for their own chastisement, and at the same time a means of carrying out His own blessed design of bringing out of evil a greater good than ever otherwise could be.

This is the wisdom of God; this is the power and the sovereignty of God. Let us remember that when we talk of that strange and mysterious word predestination, that some people are terribly afraid of, and others not afraid but ought to be afraid

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of it. They make much of it and talk about it from platforms, and who focus and make very poor work of describing a glorious mystery of God. Let us remember that predestination works this way, it works through flesh and blood, that works through the evil of men's hearts, and through all the goodness and wisdom of God at all times and all stages.

“Divine predestination never does violence to the sacredness and integrity of the human soul, that the integrity of the human individual is preserved intact and inviolate of the mysterious sovereign foreordination of God, so that men do freely what they do, for good or ill, and yet back of it all a directing, and all embracing providence of God. Who perceiving the end from the beginning, because He Himself has foreordained the end, from the beginning and all the means leading up to the end, and yet He sets majestic wisdom doing violence to nobody, and preserving the integrity at all times of each individual human personality. Further than that we can't go, but thus far we can go, or as necessary, we should go. We assure everybody that there is nothing in divine predestination, which does violence to them or the dispositions of their own heart.

“The highest level of predestination was the Son of God in the garden, under the burden of that immense sorrow, and the Son of God upon the cross bearing the sins of the whole world, that is divine predestination, although He who was upon the cross, was party to the foreordination in the council of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before the world began.”

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As we continue in our exposition of verses 29-30 keep this in mind. The Bible consistently shows the **sovereignty of God** and the **responsibility of man** – most of the time in the immediate context.

Look again at Acts 2:23 in your Bible and see this. “Him {Jesus} having been delivered by the **determined purpose and foreknowledge of God,**” the next thing says, “you have taken by **lawless hands,** have crucified.”

**God is sovereign but man is responsible for his sin.**

In verses 29-30, Paul gives the view of the story of salvation before the creation of the world, before ever there was a man or woman in the world, and certainly before our effectual call and justification, and before we ever individually had an interest

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in Jesus Christ, before we were ever convinced that our sins had justly condemned us to everlasting punishment.

Verses 29-30 show us how a person can be “in Christ Jesus” and be able to say with assurance that **“There is therefore now no condemnation!”**

Assurance of salvation because of what God purposed. What God purposed, He is able to accomplish!

There are several ways that I could go in dealing with this text. I could take each word in the text and search out its use in every other place in Scripture and that would take many sermons. {Lloyd-Jones has 15 sermons on 28-30}

The way that I have selected to deal with these verses is to simply state what I believe to be the correct interpretation and the sense of the text.

However, in saying that, I make you this offer. If you are really struggling with God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, and predestination, and election because you believe it somehow violates man’s free will, I will take as much time with you as you allow me to take to show you what the Bible teaches.

If however, you were to say to me, “I don’t care what the Bible says, I don’t accept the sovereignty of God,” then you are beyond my help because you are rejecting the authority of the Word of God.

Without being exhaustive, we do need to look at the two words in the text that seem to cause problems for so many people.

**The two words are ‘foreknew’ and ‘predestined.’**

**Foreknew:** *proginosko* (prog-in-ocē'-ko); to know beforehand, i.e. foresee: Foreknow (ordain), know (before).

**Predestined:** *proorizo* (pro-or-id'-zo); to limit in advance, i.e. predetermine: Determine before, ordain, predestinate.

“Predestination is that eternal, most wise, and immutable decree of God, whereby he did, from before all time, determined and ordain to create, dispose of, and direct to some particular end, every person and thing to which he has given, or is yet to give, being; and to make the whole creation

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subservient to, and declarative of, his own glory.” “The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” {Proverbs 16:4} – Zanchius”

Quoted from “*A Southern Baptist Looks At Predestination*”  
by Patrick Hues Mell.

There is not too much difference in these two words except that ‘foreknew’ means to know beforehand and ‘predestined’ means to bring about that which is foreknown.

Martin Luther’s grand statement:

**“God foreknows because He predestines!”**

Another word to consider is “**providence.**” {God governs the entire creation} and “**predestination**” {God ordains the events of history to accomplish His purpose}.

Now another word related to ‘foreknew’ is ‘**election.**’

We will deal with ‘election’ until chapter 9, verse 11.

**Election:** *ekloge* (ek-log-ay’); (divine) selection (abstractly or concretely): chosen, election.

We must take foreknowledge, predestination, and election together in order to understand to any degree what the Bible teaches when the Holy Spirit inspires the writers of Scripture.

Whom did God foreknow?

When did God foreknow?

God’s foreknowledge and predestination and election have been ridiculed, despised, twisted, and denied by men ever since the Bible was written.

The most common misrepresentation of God’s election and predestination is that God looked out into the future and saw who would decide to believe the Gospel and then He chose them. That is an attempt to put man in charge and has God only reacting to what man will do.

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The simple answer to this false view is that the Bible teaches that repentance and faith are gifts from God so that men have nothing to boast about. God even prepared the good works of men beforehand.

Eph 2:8-10

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,* <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The problem some men have with election and predestination is very simple. The problem men have is that the natural man refuses to bow before the sovereignty of God. Man in his stubborn pride refuses to acknowledge that God rules his destiny and that man, is responsible for his sin.

The problem some men have, therefore, with election and predestination is the sovereignty of God versus the imagined sovereignty of man, usually called man's 'free-will.'

The reason men reject predestination and election is because they want to defend man's 'free-will.'

Do you have to reconcile God's sovereignty and the Responsibility of man before you can accept it?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Do you understand that?

“Jesus was born of a virgin.”

Do you understand that?

Let me invite you to visit our website and read the “About Us” page.

Go to [www.vinelandparkbaptist.org](http://www.vinelandparkbaptist.org)

Select “About Us.”

We believe in the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

We strive to hold these two truths in balance and in no way find them to be a contradiction of thought.

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There are those who stress the sovereignty of God to the exclusion of the use of means in the salvation of sinners. They do not believe that God uses the preaching of the Gospel to save the lost. They teach a twisted view of the doctrine of election and say that God's elect will finally be saved in heaven whether or not they profess faith in Christ in this life. That is not what the doctrine of election teaches and thus it denies man's responsibility.

At the other extreme are those who overstress the responsibility of man. They teach that God is, in effect, a bystander who must wait to see if man will do something that will allow God to save him. This view is called "decisionism." They teach that salvation is a proposition. That is, God has offered a "proposition," and will save anyone who agrees to the proposition. This, in effect, makes man the savior of himself by reducing the role of the Holy Spirit to responding to a merely human act.

**The truth is that God is sovereign.** The Holy Spirit, in an act of mercy and grace, gives the new birth to those who were given to the Son by the Father. Saving faith is a gift from God. When a person is born again, only then do they have the ability to respond to the Gospel. Then they may publicly profess faith in Christ. Then they submit to believer's baptism. You see, those who are born again do make a decision to trust Christ, but only after the Holy Spirit gives them that ability.

**The truth is that man is responsible.** A Holy God justly condemns all men. If a man goes to hell, it is because he deserves to be in hell, not because he didn't have a "chance" to hear the Gospel! When a person hears the Gospel with ears of faith: Ah, that is grace!

### **Why election and predestination must be true:**

The reason that people do not accept predestination and election is because they fail to understand the **'lostness'** of men.

### **Just how 'dead' are all men until they are given new life in Christ?**

What does Ephesians 2:1 really mean?

**And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins**

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When a person understands that men are dead in sin and that means they do not have the ability to respond to the Gospel unless God gives them the ability, only then do they see the necessity of election and predestination.

### **Just how 'dead' are all men until they are given new life in Christ?**

Ezekiel's vision of 'dry bones.'

Dead in trespasses and sins.

God asked Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

"You know, LORD! Only You know."

Preach to the dry bones!

The Holy Spirit gives life to the dead bones and they live!

#### **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

**The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. 2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"**

**So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."**

**4 Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"**

**7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.**

**9 Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:" Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"**10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

**11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ' Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. 14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.**



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Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD."

**Just how 'dead' are all men until they are given new life in Christ?**

**Romans 5:12ff**

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned

**Just how 'dead' are all men until they are given new life in Christ?**

**John 6:43-45**

43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves.44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

**Just how 'dead' are all men until they are given new life in Christ?**

**Matthew 11:27-28**

27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

The fact that all men are dead in trespasses and sins is the reason why predestination and election is always **positive** and not negative.

**Sometimes the false charge** is aimed at those of us who preach this truth about election and predestination and say that we are teaching that God has chosen to elect some men and bring them to Christ and that God has chosen to elect some men to condemnation and send them to hell.

That misses the point entirely that men are **already** condemned and that God does not 'elect' to condemn them, they are condemned already. When you see that men are dead in sin and are condemned already you will see that God must do something to change their lostness.

**What is it to be lost?**

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### **SIN is not so much what we do, but what we are:**

“A great many of us need to revise our notions of what it is to be lost. The common conception seems to be that to be in hell is to be lost. The true view is that to be in sin is to be lost. Sin is worse than hell and makes it what it is. Hell would not be the awful place it is if it were not for the sin that is there. And so Jesus came, not to save people from a place called hell, but from a state of being and character, and a course of conduct called sin. ‘He shall save His people from their sins.’ (Matthew 1:21) It is sin that has cut the cable between God and man, and thus shuts man off from that current of divinity in which alone is life, holiness and peace; and left him to death, misery and ruin.”

{ Author unknown }

### Eternal Justification

**Another perversion** of election is that since God has chosen a people that they will be saved and be found in heaven even if they never come to faith in Christ while they live. But election is unto salvation. Those who were chosen before the foundation of the world and given to Jesus Christ will come to faith and be saved.

#### **John 6:37-40**

**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.38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

So don't be afraid of the sovereignty of God. Election and predestination are positive and honor God. Yes, these doctrines humble man and that is exactly what they are intended to do.

Before we close we need to see something very important. The purpose of foreknowledge {election} and predestination is that those who are chosen are to be “be conformed to the image of His Son, the firstborn among many brethren.”

God's own Son {8:3}, God's ‘firstborn’ that means the preeminence of Christ.

#### **Colossians 1:15-20**

**15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and**

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**invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

**19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.**

Dear soul, if you are not being conformed to the image of His Son, all the debate and struggle with God's election and predestination will not matter.

These are called 'things hard to be understood.' But there is the danger that a person will believe correct doctrine and still not be submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the danger that they will make a 'decision' and not be daily living under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The devil believes in election and predestination.

So correct doctrine will not save you unless it is applied to your soul and you trust in Jesus Christ.

So I ask you the same question that the Lord asked Adam after he had disobeyed God's command.

### **Where are you?**

God was not asking this question because He did not know the physical presence of Adam. What God is asking Adam is now that you have disobeyed My command, now that you have believed the half-lie of the devil, that you can now determine for yourself 'right and wrong', are you better off?

### **Sinner where are you?**

Sinner, are you clinging to your pride and holding the serpent of sin in your embrace? That bosom sin will kill you.

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Where are you?

Do you need a Savior?

The question is not 'will' you trust Jesus, the question is 'can' you trust Jesus? Can you forsake any idea that you are in control of your eternal destiny and simply place all your trust in the blood of Jesus, which is shed for the remission of sin?

Sinners don't refuse the offer of free and sovereign grace. If you refuse to come to Christ you will remain under the wrath of God.

If you can come to Christ it will be because God has given you the ability to believe in saving faith. You will not want or need to claim any ability in yourself.

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

**Salvation is of the Lord!**