

The Intense Involvement of God

Romans 8:29-31

- :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.
- :30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
- :31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

REVIEW

See:

- an artist bent over and laboring over the details of his work of art.
- a shepherd bent over, studying, and caring for the needs of the animals in his care
- a father bent over, comprehending, and lovingly counseling his son
- a husband bent over, hearing, and ministering to the cares of his bride

All these images speak of God's intense involvement in our lives, for:

- He is the potter; we are the clay.
- He is the shepherd; we are His sheep.
- He is the Father; we are His children.
- He is the groom; we are His bride.

God is intensely involved in our lives. So we see in our text. One commentator suggests that we see the involvement of God's heart in :29 and God's hand in :30.

I. THE INTENSE INVOLVEMENT OF GOD'S HEART WITH HIS PEOPLE (:29)

A. The Depth of His Intimacy – Foreknowledge (“for whom he did foreknow”)

1. We know that God knows everything and everybody. But there's a special kind of gracious, affectionate, invested, personal knowledge that God has with His own.
 - a. See the contrast of Amos 1:2-2:8, where the Lord shows exact knowledge of other nations' sins, and Amos 3:2, where He says to Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”
 - b. See David's wonder in Ps. 139:1 – “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.”
2. Clearly this foreknowledge of God is no mere ability to see things before they happen. It is, as Gill says, “the everlasting love of God to his own people, his delight in them; in this sense he knew them, he foreknew them from everlasting, affectionately loved them, and took infinite delight and pleasure in them; and this love is the foundation [of all the actions that follow in this text].”

B. The Distance of His Intentions – Foreordaining (“he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”)

1. You talk about shooting high! This is like taking a rusty cog and saying “I'm going to make a 747 jet airliner out of you.” Rags to riches! Pauper to prince! No...worm to warrior! Dung to the delight of God! Never has there been or ever shall be any ascending transformation anything like it. Believers to be conformed to the image of the Son of God!!!
2. Oh, there have been many foretastes of the improvement of man's lot:
 - a. Joseph – jailed slave to second-in-command of Egypt
 - b. Moses – infant slave child to be killed to son of Pharaoh's daughter
 - c. Mary Magdalene – devil-possessed street woman to privileged disciple
 - d. Prodigal son – from hog slop to ring, robe, feast, and fatherly embrace!
 - e. And there is of course the great ascendancy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who made himself of no reputation and humbled himself to endure death on the cross, and now God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name!
3. Such an ascendancy for *us*! That *we* should be conformed to the image of His son! We are thus pre-appointed by the divine mind! Such distance of change!

C. The Dignifying of His Inclusion – Fellowship (“that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”)

1. Hearken back to Romans 8:14-17.
2. “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (II Cor. 6:18)
3. Are you hearing this?!! “Behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 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.”
(I John 3:1-2)
4. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (Heb. 2:11)

II. THE INTENSE INVOLVEMENT OF GOD'S HAND WITH HIS PEOPLE (:30)

A. In :30 we see how God's hand is bringing about what His heart desires. It shows His reliable, methodical, detailed, thorough engagement in the process.

1. As we see in His care for the vineyard described in Isa. 5:1-2
2. As we see in Wisdom preparing her feast in Prov. 9:1ff
3. As we see in the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33-34

B. The Steps

1. He calls. (“them he also called”)

- a. Some commentators distinguish between a sweeping, outward invitation to all as in “Many are called but few are chosen” (Matt. 20:16) and an internal, effectual summons from the Lord, to which all who receive it respond, as did Matthew or Zacchaeus.
- b. God's call commonly comes by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and the Word is His sword (Eph. 6:17).
- c. Have you been called? Peter urges, make your calling sure (II Pet. 1:10).

2. He justifies. (“them he also justified”)

- a. In regeneration a person *receives a new life and nature* (II Cor. 5:17).
- b. In progressive sanctification a person *changes away from being like the world and toward being like God* (II Cor. 3:18).
- c. In justification, a person receives a *new standing*. Justification is not something wrought *in* man, but a judicial act where something is declared *about* him. It involves:
 1. Removal of the penalty of sin (death) – “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (Col. 2:14)
 2. Adding of righteousness (imputation) – “that that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (II Cor. 5:21b)
 3. Restoration to favor (friendship) – “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.” (James 2:23)

3. He glorifies. (“Them he also glorified”) Matthew Henry:

- a. The power of corruption was broken when we responded to the calling.
- b. The guilt of sin was removed in justification.
- c. So all that hindered was taken out of the way, and nothing can come between that soul and glory. And note, It is spoken of as a thing done: “He glorified,” because of the certainty of it. See here the perseverance of the saints.
- d. Nothing less than that glory, nothing less than the whole wonder of heaven and that forever, would suffice given the love and engagement of God in our lives. Meanwhile, are we suffering? It is but a light affliction compared to the eternal weight of glory before us (Rom. 8:17-18). That is Paul's argument. And ours.

Conclusion: :31 “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Here's what we can say: Yea and Amen.

DISCUSSION

1. God's goal stated in :29 is that believers be “conformed to the image of His Son.” In simple terms, what do these words mean? Is it happening with you, as best you can tell? If so, how?

2. All God's children have been “called” (:30). What do you think this call looks like? Describe it. Tell how it has occurred in *your* life.