

96-09-06b

Okay, we're ready now to resume after our break. And having reviewed the concepts in Romans 8.28, we're ready to take a look at Romans 8.29. And it's a very interesting thing because you start looking at these concepts of foreknowledge and predestination and so forth, and it starts sounding like, well, here's some pretty heavy theology. But in fact, these things really do make a difference.

And I hope to try to demonstrate that tonight. So, first of all, let's read 28 and 29 together. Now, we know that all things work together for good in the case of or in the sphere of those who love God, in the case of those who are the called according to his purpose.

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. He's gonna go on to say that not only did he predestine, but he also called, justified and glorified this same group. Now, this has been viewed as looking at and talking about salvation.

But let me just step back and refresh our mind on the context here. We've been talking about the Christian life all along, haven't we? And in this chapter, he said, all things work together for good. What were the all things that he's talking about here? When he says all things work together for good, just take a look at chapter eight and we'll see, get an idea of what all things means.

In chapter eight, verse two, Paul talks about our freedom. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. We have been freed in this age from things that held human beings captive in ages past.

That freedom is one of these things that works together for good. In verse four, the righteous requirement of the law can be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. It's possible in this age to walk in the spirit.

That's a new thing. And it's one of these all things. In verse six, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

This is a new thing. We can be spiritually minded. In verse nine, it talks about the spirit of God dwelling in us.

That's a new thing. The spirit of God dwells in us in this age. In verse 11, he talks about the fact that the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies.

There's a very fascinating study you can do on that verse because he's not talking about resurrection. Here's another quiz question. What's going to happen at the resurrection? Let's say we're not in the rapture generation and we have all died.

We're like the Apollo astronauts that got incinerated on the launching pad. We're like the people,

the non-survivors of Flight 800 that are still on the bottom of the ocean. What is going to happen for those believers when Christ returns? They're going to be resurrected, right? And what body are they going to have? Resurrection body.

It's a new body. Doesn't matter what happened to the old one. They're getting a new issue body, right? What does this say? This says that he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal body, this body right here.

And what he's talking about, he's contrasting what we saw in chapter seven with what we see in chapter eight. This is life in the sense of productivity. In chapter seven, he said, remember in the old days when we were under the law, we wanted to do right and we couldn't.

With my mind, I serve the law of God. With my body, I serve the law of sin. And I find that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

No good can come out of my fleshly existence here because I'm carnal, I'm sold under sin. But now, because of the indwelling spirit, he can give life to this mortal body. We can now produce eternally valuable things in this life and in this body.

And that's what he's talking about. That's a new thing. That's a special privilege and opportunity that we have.

In verse 13, we can by the spirit put to death the deeds of the body. Didn't used to be able to do that. Now we can.

By the spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the body and live. And that's life now. That's not life in the eternal future.

That's talking about what we're doing in this body, in this mortal body. That's a new thing. In verse 14, we can be led by the spirit of God.

That's a factor to consider in this all things. In verse 15, we are adopted as sons. The spirit tells us that we are children of God.

And in verse 17, it says, if we're children, we are heirs. We're heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if what? If we suffer with him. The inheritance is based on suffering.

That's one of these all things. Inheritance comes to us, but it doesn't come to us by ministry. It doesn't come to us by service.

It doesn't come to us by evangelism. Our inheritance comes to us when we share in the sufferings of Christ, when we go through bad times in this life and think the right way as we go through it. Anybody can survive a tragedy.

Any unbeliever can survive a hurricane, whatever it is that just hit the East Coast. People get wiped out. They pick up their few remaining belongings out of the mud and they go on.

Anybody can endure and survive. What's going on in our soul when we face these things, that is what determines our inheritance in the eternal future. What a great opportunity.

All we have to do is trust God. All we have to do is think about our eternal hope, relax and have peace and glory when we realize that God is using these things to improve us and to teach us and perfect us and it builds our inheritance. It's a non... It's reasonably easy to do.

That's a part of the all things. Look at verse 20. All of creation has been subjected to futility.

It's not just us that live in a fallen world and face bad times and disasters. All of creation has been cursed. It's all been subjected to vanity or to futility.

That's one of these all things that he's talking about. In verse 25, we hope for things that we don't see. We trust that God is going to give us things that we can't even comprehend.

We don't know where it's going to come from, how it's going to come, what it's going to look like, what shape it's going to take. We just trust God. That's one of these all things.

And in verse 26, it says that the spirit helps us in our weakness. We're going to be weak. We don't know how to pray.

We don't know how to operate in a lot of cases, but that's why God has given us his spirit. His spirit gives us life. His spirit gives us strength.

His spirit gives us everything we need to accomplish God's purpose. Now, all of those things are in chapter eight, and when we get to verse 28, what does he say? All things, all of this, the fact that we're here, the fact that we're under a curse, the fact that we're suffering, the fact that the spirit's with us, the fact that we've been declared to be heirs of God, the fact that we have the potential to share the inheritance of Jesus Christ, the fact that the spirit is there to strengthen us and sustain us and comfort us and encourage us and remind us that we're sons, all of that works together for good. He did not say he owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

He did not say God knows your every wish and your every want, and God will give you all the material prosperity that you desire, because this good isn't talking about our circumstantial benefit. Our circumstantial benefit is included in this, but the purpose, all of these things that we've seen in chapter eight are a part of God's plan. God let us grow up in a fallen world with a fallen nature.

God made all of these provisions because it works together for good, and it will work together for good for us if we recognize that that's why we're here and take advantage of it. Recognize that all of the bad stuff that we face is for a good purpose. Now, with that in mind, in verse 29, he says,

because.

The first word in verse 29 is because. All things work together for good for these particular believers who love God, who recognize that they're called according to his purpose. Because.

Now, if we were thinking in terms of our circumstances, we'd say, well, all things work together for good because God's all powerful and he knows my needs. He's going to provide my food and clothing and shelter and provide my right opposite number and provide my wants and desires and so forth. But this also tells us about what the good is because it says, this is why all things are going to work together for good.

It's because it all depends on God. It doesn't depend on us, it doesn't depend on how hard we work, how many souls we win, it depends on God. Why is everything going to work together and accomplish God's purpose? Because God knew something in eternity past.

And verse 29 says, whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. Now there's a lot in here and I'm not going to belabor these things. Let me first talk about the word foreknew.

There are people involved here. The whom, whom was foreknown by God. The word foreknow in Greek is made up of a preposition pro, P-R-O, and then the word for knowledge, gnosko, to know something.

Gnosis is a noun that means knowledge. Gnosko is the verb that means to possess that knowledge, to know something. Prognosko, pro means beforehand.

So you know something beforehand. This word isn't used very many places in scripture. It's used in acts.

When Paul is talking, I don't have that reference in my notes here, but Paul says, I had a zeal for God. I was a great Pharisee. I did wonderful things as a legalistic, Jewish religious guy.

And if you don't believe me, just ask the people who knew me before in Jerusalem. And he uses prognosko. They knew me back when.

They knew me years ago when that's the kind of guy I was. Prognosko, they knew something beforehand. This word is also used in 2 Peter 3, 17.

Now here's the thing, because people make all of this stuff about the foreknowledge of God, and because God knew it in eternity past, his knowledge made it certain. His knowledge, because he knows something, that makes it a decree, because God couldn't know something and then not have it come to pass. So if God knew it in eternity past, that set it in concrete and it can't change.

And people just get wrapped around all these loops. Well, guess what? Scripture says that

people can have foreknowledge also. We've already seen it in Acts.

There were Jews in the room who knew Paul beforehand, and Peter's gonna use the same thing. Look at 2 Peter 3, 17. 2 Peter 3, 17.

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, guess what word that is? Prognosko. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked, but instead grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now, what is it that he's talking about that they knew beforehand? That's verses 14 through 16.

He's talking about the new heavens and the new earth in verse 13. He says, that's coming. There's gonna be a new heavens and a new earth.

And he says, therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things. Looking ahead. Here's the accomplishment of God's purpose.

New heavens and new earth, reflection of God's glory, eternal future. Looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace. That's the goal.

It doesn't say be found in him with lots of converts, be found in him with lots of ministry, be found in him having given X number of dollars or having performed X number of hours of worthy Christian service. Be found by him in peace. What is the fruit of the spirit? Love, joy, peace.

It's all in our minds. It's all what goes on in our soul that counts. Paul tells the Corinthians, you're getting all tangled up about whether you eat the meat offered to idols or you don't eat the meat.

The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That's the kingdom of God. It's what you think that counts.

And the great thing is everybody can do it. We have no excuse for not reaping great rewards in the eternal future because we don't have to be a missionary. We don't have to be a great speaker.

Don't have to be a great singer. Don't have to be a great evangelist. Don't have to be articulate.

Don't have to go anywhere. Don't have to dress up. All we have to do is day by day live in pursuit of that calling to which we've been called to live and think all the time about what would please God, to put the things of God first.

So that's what he says here. Looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace without spot and blameless. And consider that the long suffering or the patience of our Lord is deliverance.

As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you. As

also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand. There we are in Romans.

We're in the middle of some stuff that's in some cases hard to understand. And some people who are untaught and unstable twist these things to their own destruction as they do the rest of the scriptures. And you're going to find people who misunderstand Romans, who misunderstand the rest of the scriptures and interpret it wrongly.

But then in verse 17, he says, you therefore beloved, since you know these things beforehand, you've already got this knowledge, beware, don't be fooled, don't be taken in, don't be misled. Do not be distracted. You know the new heavens and the new earth is coming.

Live like it. Think about the judgment seat of Christ. Think about the opportunity God has given us because of his word and his spirit and do something about it.

There's no excuse for us not to excel as believers and be found good and faithful servants. There's no reason not to. We have everything we need.

We know it's coming. We know how to do it. We know that nothing we accomplish and nothing we pursue in this life in terms of earthly material things is going to mean anything in eternal future.

So he says, set your mind on it and just do it. So that's foreknowledge. You can also look a few pages earlier in 1 Peter 1, verse 20 and see a way that this has been translated.

It's talking about Christ that we were not redeemed with corruptible things in 1 Peter 1, verse 18, like silver and gold. Silver and gold are corruptible things and a lot of us are in pursuit of, I mean all of us want some degree of financial security and so forth, but it's a corruptible thing. Aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers.

We were not redeemed with those things. We were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed, and the new King James says, he indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you.

That's a wrong translation. The word here is *progenosco*. He was known beforehand.

God, the father, knew God the son before the world was ever created, knew that he was faithful, knew that when the world came about and human history took place, that he would be faithful, that he would fulfill the father's purpose. God knew that before he ever sent Jesus into the world. He knew that he would be faithful.

He knew that he would obey. Even though he had the choice not to, God knew that he would. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but he was manifested, he was made evident

in these last times for us who through him believe in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and your hope are in God.

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. What's the fruit of the spirit? Love, joy, peace. That should be our goal.

That's our measure. Don't worry about church. Don't worry about attendance.

Don't worry about giving. Don't worry about evangelism. Those things will come if we pursue the priorities.

What we do need to worry about is if we come to the end of the day and look back and say, you know, I didn't have love. I don't feel like I've got the capacity to love. I don't have the ability to be sacrificial and beneficial toward others.

I don't have joy. I'm miserable. I'm unhappy.

I'm dissatisfied with the status quo. I don't have peace. I'm disturbed.

I'm troubled. I have my mind running on things and it won't quit. What does that mean? No fruit of the spirit.

If there's no love, if there's no joy, if there's no peace or if they exist in very limited and diminished form, that should be a big red flag waving. Something is wrong because the power of God is available to make those things happen. We don't grit our teeth and generate them.

God does them, but we have to let it. We have to pursue it. We have to want it.

And we have to decide that it's more important than anything else in life. When we do that, love and joy and peace are shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit. We saw that in Romans 5. But God respects the decisions that we make.

And if we choose to pursue something else, he's not going to intrude himself. He's not going to force himself on us and we will miss out. We make the decision and all of us have to stand and look and say, what about this last day? What about this last week? What about this last month? What's the quota? What's the produce in terms of joy and peace in my soul? If it's not there, we need to immediately take steps to get our priorities straight and pursue the right thing because that's the only reason we're here.

We are flower beds for love and joy and peace and patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control. And we ought to be having a blast regardless of circumstances, regardless of history, regardless of prospects for the future. We ought to be having a blast in this life.

And if we're not, we have only ourselves to blame because God has put everything in place in his supernatural power. His spirit dwells in us. Read chapter eight.

His spirit comforts us. He prays for us. He intercedes.

He encourages. He confirms. He enables.

He leads. He guides. All of the divine power of God is right there within us if we're just willing to take advantage of it.

That's the purpose of God. If we love God, if we see that we're called according to his purpose, that's gonna be the most important thing. So that brings us back to this idea of foreknowledge because God foreknew somebody.

Now, who is it that God foreknew? It says whom he foreknew. Well, look at Romans 8.28. What group of believers are we talking about? A, it's a subset of all believers. It doesn't say God foreknew all believers.

Romans 8.29 says because, and that links it back to 8.28. What does 8.28 say? It says there's a group of believers who love God. There's a group of believers who are called according to his purpose. It's like this.

If you issue a summons, let's say there's a disaster. Let's say we're out on the East Coast, a hurricane, whatever it is, went through, all kinds of needful tasks to be accomplished, shelters and dishing up food and rebuilding and cleaning up trash and scooping mud and so forth. So they issue a summons.

They issue a call. They say, we need volunteers. Red Cross needs volunteers.

Salvation Army needs volunteers. The Corps of Engineers, everybody, they need volunteers. Come fill sandbags, come help us.

They issue a summons. Now, who did the summons go to? Went to the entire community. Everyone is now the called.

After these volunteers come in, a portion of those who are called are going to respond and they're going to come in and work and self-sacrificially, like the bombing in Oklahoma City. They had volunteers that worked day and night digging out rubble and bodies and so forth. And afterward, remember the speeches that they gave and the meetings that they had and the memorial services, and they said, we'd like to thank our volunteers.

We'd like to thank those who worked tirelessly to assist in this time of crisis. Now, there was a difference between the ones who were called and the ones who responded to the call and who accomplished the purpose for which the call was given. The call was given for volunteers to come

and accomplish a mission.

The ones who came and accomplished the mission, they are truly the called. They were called according to the purpose. They fulfilled the purpose.

And that's what Paul is talking about here. Those who are called according to his purpose. His purpose, this word in Greek is pro-thesis.

You know what a thesis is? It's a proposition. You put a plan out there. You lay something out and say, this is my plan.

This is my purpose. This is what I want to accomplish. This is my goal out here.

Well, you stick pro on the front of that. You do that ahead of time. You say ahead of time, here's my plan.

This was used in Greek of someone who was desiring to get married. Their pro-thesis was to get married. They got engaged and they demonstrated that they had this purpose.

That's all it means by called according to his purpose. They're called according to God's plan, the thing that he's got mapped out. So there's a certain relatively small percentage of believers who respond to that call and participate in the accomplishment of God's purpose on the positive side.

Those are the people that are foreknown in Romans 8.29. And that's the link. It's critical to watch the prepositions in Greek. And when you look at Romans 8.29, it says all things work together for good to these that love God, to these who are called according to his purpose because whom he foreknew.

Whom is it that he foreknew? Paul has used no language to broaden this out to all believers. He's talking about these who love God. These are called according to his purpose.

God knew ahead of time that like Jesus Christ, they would respond and that in a greater or lesser degree, some 30 fold, some 60 fold, some 100 fold, they would respond to the call and would participate in a positive sense in God's plan. So what did God do? God wasn't taken by surprise when believers seized on this opportunity and decided I'm going to set everything else aside as secondary and focus on my relationship with God and fulfilling my purpose. God didn't wake up and say, oh my, some people have responded.

He knew that there would be those who would respond and he knew who they were. And he made provision ahead of time. In Oklahoma City, when they put out the call for volunteers, they knew people would respond.

Out on the East Coast, the same thing. What do they do? They set up cots. They have a pretty good idea even as human beings that well, we're going to get X number of volunteers.

We need a place for them to stay. We need some refreshments. We need some food.

They know ahead of time people are going to show up and they make provision. That's what God did. God knew there would be people that respond to this call to holiness, this call to accomplish God's purpose.

So whom he foreknew, he did something. And it says here in English, he predestined them to be conformed to the image of his son. Notice something.

Everything you hear, if you read any theological writing about predestination, it all centers on salvation. We were predestined to be saved. We were predestined to come to Christ and double predestination.

God not only destined people to come to salvation, but they also destined people to hell. And they say, oh no, there's no such thing as double predestination. God only predestinated the believers.

He just failed to predestinate the unbelievers. And that's why they're going to the lake of fire. Well, it sounds like a sin of omission instead of commission.

But what's the point? Predestinate or predestine here is a specific Greek word. And the word here is pro-horizo. Pro is our familiar thing that means this happened beforehand.

Horizo is a word from which we get horizon. We saw this word back in chapter one, talking about Jesus Christ. Remember in Romans 1, 4, when it said that God had marked out, God had designated Jesus Christ to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

That was horizo. God drew a circle around him like the horizon. God marked him out and said, you're designated the son of God.

All this means here, really, instead of predestinated, we ought to maybe translate this predestinated or designated beforehand. God knew that people would respond to his call as believers to holiness. And he said, those that respond, I'm going to conform them to the image of my son.

This has nothing to do with salvation. This has everything to do with the image of Jesus Christ. The word image there is icon.

And for people who deal with computers, we know what an icon is. It's a little picture. It's an image.

It is a symbol that stands for something. And we as believers have the opportunity to participate in this designation that God has created. God knew that people would be responding to the call.

And so he said, these that respond to the call, I'm going to conform them to the image of my son. That's what this chapter eight has been all about. That's why we have the spirit, why we have the word, why we have the inner life of the spirit.

It makes us like Christ. There was no Christ likeness in the Old Testament. It's unique to this age.

And so God said, I'm gonna issue this summons. The ones that respond, I'm going to provide to transform them by the renewing of their minds. I'm gonna provide for them to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Why? There's a purpose for that. So that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. When's the last place in Romans we had a reference to brethren and Jesus Christ altogether? It was up in the middle of the chapter, wasn't it? Remember 14 through 17 of Romans eight, as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Doesn't say as many as are saved, says the ones who are led by the spirit of God. We all know there are believers who are manifestly not led by the spirit of God. They run in the opposite direction.

They're saved, they're gonna live in the eternal future, but they're not led in this age, in this time, in this life by the spirit of God. But the ones who are led by the spirit of God, they are sons indeed. They're sons indeed.

And he says in 17, if they are sons, if they're children, then they're heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. That's the purpose of God. God wants to grant an inheritance.

God wants his glory to be reflected in believers. That's the purpose. He doesn't want Jesus Christ to stand alone, reflecting and embodying the glory of the father.

He wants a whole host of brethren to be doing that. Jesus Christ is the firstborn among those brethren, but there's supposed to be many brethren that are reflecting the glory of God in the eternal future. And you need to just draw a circle around verse 29 and tie it back to verses 14 through 17, because it's the same thing.

Paul is doing like Perry Mason. He's tying this all together. He's saying, this is the reason.

He's linking it all up. And it's all talking about the same thing. He doesn't switch horses and start talking about salvation.

So God knew ahead of time that there would be faithful believers who would be sons in deed, who would live in a way that qualifies them to participate in the inheritance with Jesus Christ. And so he made provision for them. He made provision for them to be changed in this life, to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 30, we will see next time that those that he marked out ahead of time, he also called. He issued the summons. The summons goes out to all believers.

Many are called, few are chosen. Why is that? Are we living as sons? Are we living as those who are called? If you're summoned and you don't respond to the summons, it is as though you were not summoned. If they say we need volunteers at the blown up building and you don't go, well, you're no different than somebody that didn't get any summons.

Those who respond and who participate in the mission, they are called in deed. They are participants in deed. And that's what Paul is focusing on.

Those whom he marked out ahead of time, these he called. And the ones he called, he justified. And the ones he justified, he glorified.

Now notice these are all past tenses. This is still talking about what God did in the past. All of these verbs that we started out with that had that prefix pro, God in eternity past made provision.

He said, here's my plan, here's my purpose. There are gonna be people that respond to this call. I'm going to provide for their conformity to the image of Christ.

I'm gonna provide for their summons. I'm gonna provide for their declaration of righteousness and I'm gonna provide for their glorification. This glorification is in the past tense but we know this hasn't happened yet.

We have not been glorified yet, any of us. There are believers in the future that have not yet been declared righteous because they haven't yet gotten with the plan of God and they haven't learned about righteousness by faith. So my encouragement to you as you meditate on this passage this week and prepare for what we study next time is to keep in mind the context, keep in mind everything that Paul has laid as a foundation in chapter eight about the fact that now in this life there's no condemnation.

Instead, we have the provision of God. All of those things we pointed out that we know about that are a part of the all things that work together for good. And why does it work together for good? Because God knew ahead of time we were coming and he made arrangements for us.

The table is set right in the presence of our enemies. He can anoint our heads with oil. Goodness and mercy can follow us all the days of our life and we can dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Why? Because God has made all the provision. This righteousness, this accomplishment of the plan is something that God does. Nowhere in here do you see anything about Christian works of service.

Nowhere in here do you see about what depends on our efforts in terms of works. It all depends on our attitude, on what we prioritize, on what we value. Do we love God? Do we see ourselves

as called? We have the most tremendous opportunity in history to participate in God's plan as believers and it's completely up to us.

We'll continue our study next time. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the clear presentation of these things. We thank you for the ministry of the spirit that makes them clear and makes them live in our hearts. We thank you that even though we live in a fallen world with a fallen nature and corrupt flesh, that you have still found a way to instill in us life and eternal impact.

We pray that as a result of studying these things, we will be motivated and encouraged to pursue the calling with which we have been called and that the ultimate result will be the glorification of our savior, Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name, amen.