

(8:29) - *“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”* - We ended with the first part of this verse in the last lesson. Recall that in the language of Scripture, something “foreknown” by God is not simply that of which God was aware prior to a certain point in time, but it also includes the idea of that which God has determined beforehand. **“Foreknow”** is reserved for those matters which God deliberately and freely chose and ordained. This is God’s foreknowledge by which He loved the people of His choice, not because of any goodness in them or any goodness they would do in the future. It is God’s sovereign will and purpose. Many deny this great truth because they think it makes God unjust or unfair. Paul deals with these objections later in **Romans 9** and shows that God is not unjust or unfair. God promises that whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (**Rom. 10:13**), but He also reveals that none of us in our fallen and lost state and of our own choice will call upon Him. So, God also says that He chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world whom He will bring to faith in Christ (**Eph. 1:3-11**). Our finite minds cannot fully comprehend both truths concurrently, yet we can rejoice in both by God’s Word. God understands, because His understanding is infinite, and we rest in this.

“He also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of His Son” - **“Predestinate”** means “to determine beforehand.” Peter referred to this as **“the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23)** in speaking of the death of Christ for the redemption of His people. Paul described it as **“the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11)**. Those whom God foreknew, He has predestinated that they all **“be conformed to the image of His Son.”** This proves that God foreknew and predestinated persons and not merely events as some claim. This also shows the absolute certainty of the complete salvation of all whom God foreknew and predestinated, because they will be fully **“be conformed to the image of His Son.”** They will be like Christ! As man was originally created in the image of God and lost that image in the fall, that image is restored in a greater way in salvation by grace when the redeemed are perfectly glorified and conformed to be like Christ, perfectly sinless as glorified saints.

“That He might be the firstborn among many brethren” - Christ has all the pre-eminence among the many brethren whom He redeemed. God’s purpose to glorify Himself includes Christ’s pre-eminence. All of our salvation was conditioned on Christ, and He alone satisfied those conditions and merited for us all spiritual blessings. He was the first to be resurrected from the dead, the first-fruits and the first-born. His resurrection is the sure and certain pledge of our resurrection and final glory. Under the law the firstborn was the Lord’s choice (**Exod. 13:2**), had authority over all the sons, and acted as the Lord’s priest. Christ is the firstborn of the Father with regard to all creatures. Christ is the firstborn of all God’s sons, because they are all chosen in Him. Christ is the firstborn from the dead to die no more. He redeemed them all by His obedience unto death (**Heb. 2:9-17**), and He arose from the dead because of their justification (**Rom. 4:24-25**). They stand before God righteous in Him because of His righteousness imputed to them, and they have spiritual life from Him. His is the chief glory, for all are to be in Him and like Him.

(8:30) - How can we know if we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ? The answer is found in this verse. Notice, as we read and study this verse, all of these blessings of God’s grace are revealed in a Greek verb tense that indicates past acts that have continual (in this case, eternal) results and effects. This is because even though many whom God did predestinate have yet to be born and experience these blessings in time, in the sovereign and

eternal purpose and mind of God it is as good as done. The reasons are these: (1) It is impossible for God to fail to accomplish His purposes and impossible for God to lie and fail to keep any of His promises to His chosen people (*Isa. 46:9-13; Lam. 3:21-23; Mal. 3:6; 1 Cor. 1:26-31*); (2) All the purposes and promises of God were conditioned on Christ Who is the Surety of the covenant and could not fail to fulfill all that God requires to save His people to the uttermost (*Rom. 8:1, 33-39; 2 Cor. 1:20*).

“Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called” - To be ***“called”*** refers to the effectual, powerful, invincible calling of the Holy Spirit in the new birth by the preaching of the Gospel (*John 1:12-13; 3:3,5; Acts 13:48; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). Men by nature, of their own wills, will not come to Christ for salvation because we naturally love darkness and are rebellious towards God (*John 3:19-20; 5:40; 6:44; Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*). If any come to Christ it is by the power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth (*John 1:11-13*). All whom God chose before the foundation of the world, all whom He has predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, will be ***“called”*** by Christ through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit (*John 10:11-30*). They will all be taught of God, convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and brought to Christ by God-given faith (*John 6:44-45; 16:8-11*).

“And whom He called, them He also justified” - This is not teaching that the justification of sinners is based on or caused by their calling to faith. This calling of the Holy Spirit which brings a sinner to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works is the evidence that he has been ***“justified”*** (forgiven of all his sins and declared not guilty but righteous in Christ) by God. Faith does not justify a sinner before God. God justifies His people based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. This calling is the fruit and effect of having already been justified by God’s grace in Christ. So, faith in Christ is the fruit and evidence of justification, not the cause (*Rom. 3:19-22; 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:18-21*). No sinner has the right to claim to have been chosen of God, justified by God, or redeemed by the blood of Christ apart from God-given faith in Christ and true repentance of dead works and idolatry.

“And whom He justified, them He also glorified” - To be ***“glorified”*** refers to our final glorification at the second coming of Christ when we will be united with our new, glorified, spiritual, perfect bodies and be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ (*1 Cor. 15:50-57*). This has not happened yet in our experience, but there are three things to keep in mind:

(1) It has happened in the mind of God ***“who calleth those things that are not as though they were”*** (*Rom. 4:17*);

(2) It is sure and certain to be our experience because of the sovereign power of God’s grace in Christ Who is risen as the ***“first-fruits”*** of believers who have died (*1 Cor. 15:20,23*); and

(3) We who believe are already glorified in the Person of Christ, our Head and Representative (*Eph. 2:6*).

Let every true believer glory in the grace of God by which we are predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. This brings joy and peace in believing in the midst of afflictions and trials. We are told plainly that it is God’s will that we enjoy this absolute certainty of salvation which neither the world nor all the powers of hell can break (*Heb. 6:16-20; Isa. 40:1-2, 31; 55:3; 54:17; 61:10; John 6:37; 10:27-29*).