

Series: God Saves #1420

Title: Romans 8.29b; Acts 4

God Predestined Good Friday

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have come to this Friday, which is a unique Friday on our calendars. This is the day we, solemnly and with gratefulness of heart, remember our Lord's death upon the cross; His sacrifice to be the atonement for our sin. This is Good Friday. My prayer is that you will take some time today or tonight to prayerfully reflect on what Christ's death means for you. And if you do not yet believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then make today the day you surrender yourself to Him. Believe on Jesus and you will be saved.

And then, on this Sunday we will celebrate the resurrection. In churches all throughout the world one will say, "He is Risen!" and the other will respond, "He is Risen Indeed!" Jesus died. *And* just came back to life. He was resurrected and because Christ was resurrected, we too shall be resurrected. In John chapter 11 and verse 25 Jesus said, "**I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies...**" And in John chapter 14 and verse 19 Jesus said, "**because I live, you will live also.**" This is the great hope of the Christian. And we rejoice and we are glad that we have been predestined to be rescued from the slavery of sin, that we have been given new life, and that we will live forever with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the new heavens and the new earth. We do so because of Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday!

And so, my friends, let's worship Jesus our crucified *and* risen Savior today, tomorrow, and Sunday and all the days of our lives right into eternity. Christ is the resurrection and the life and because He lives we also will live.

And please turn with me in your Bible to Acts chapter 4. Acts 4. In the providence of God we are in the middle of our current series God Saves. So we have already been talking about the saving work of Christ for us. And we have been looking at the will of God, or the freedom of God's will in the choices that He makes, from before the foundation of the world. Our focus is on the doctrine or the teaching of predestination. Given the significance of this day, I want to take us to a verse in the fourth chapter of Acts that again reveals God is the God who predestines. First, let me just read the verse so you can hear the word "predestined." Then, I will develop the context and just make a point or two before we go.

Acts chapter 4, verse 28, "**to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.**" The word here for predestined is the same word we have in Romans 8, verse 29. The Greek word for predestined is the same in Acts 4.28 and Romans 8.29. What is the context for this statement? The answer is a prayer meeting, and this verse is part of a prayer the apostles and the early Christians prayed to God in this *awesome* chapter in the Book of Acts. In Acts chapter 3 Peter and John healed a lame man on their way to the temple. And this created a great outcry from the "Men of Israel." When Peter is confronted by this he launches into a sermon! That is Acts chapter 3.

I want you to hear the beginning of Acts chapter 4, and the response Peter and John too give to Peter's sermon. So I am reading again in Acts 4, verses 1-4. "**As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, ² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.**"

Ah, you heard there that the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming what? Yes! Jesus and the resurrection from the dead. There it is: the resurrection, which we celebrate in just a few days. It is Friday but Sunday's coming! In verse 3 the apostles are arrested and put in jail. And in verse 4 our hearts are glad to read that about five thousand men believed in Jesus. And that was just the men.

Certainly woman and children also believed. The early church is growing *fast*. See what happens when we teach people and proclaim the resurrected Jesus?

Well, what follows in chapter 4 is that the Jewish religious rulers, elders, and scribes confront Peter and John. Again Peter launches a sermon! Then Peter and John answer the various accusations being made against them. The rulers confer among the themselves as to what should be done with the apostles when it is decided to threaten them to stop preaching and release them. Let me drop down and read Acts 4, verses 18-20, **“And when they had summoned them, they commanded [the apostles] not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; ²⁰ for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.’”**

Listen to that firm and unrelenting conviction to preach coming from Peter and John. Well, when released from prison, the apostles returned to the brothers and sisters in Christ, reported what had happened, and then all the early Christians went to God in prayer. And, in this *powerful* prayer, recorded beginning in Acts 4, verse 23 we have our verse. I just have time to pick up the prayer at verse 27. Remember, this is addressed to the Lord in heaven, **“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”**

What a statement. These believers affirm in intercession what we have been learning. What happened in Jerusalem: the crucifixion of the holy servant of God, Jesus, whom God anointed, Christ who was brought before Herod and Pontius Pilate and Gentiles and the Jews (the peoples of Israel), all of this came from the hand and purpose of...*God!* Whatever Your hand (meaning God’s hand) whatever Your purpose (meaning God’s purpose) *predestined* to occur. That is, all of what happened to Jesus was pre-determined from long ago. Yes. The death of Jesus was predestined.

That is not say that Herod, and Pilate, and the Gentiles and Jews that crucified Christ are innocent; as I said last time it is not say they are God’s pre-programmed robots. No. They will all be held accountable by God for the death of Jesus. But this word *predestined* *is* to say that in the sovereign will of God it was always the plan that exactly what happened to God’s Son happen as it happened and when and where it happened and nothing could have stopped it from happening.

We can say God’s efficacious will is on display in these verses. God’s free will was successful and effective in producing His desired result: the death of Christ as atonement for our sin. And God’s permissive will is on display in these verses. God permitted, God allowed for the sin, for the evil of the free will, the free agency of man to prevail such that God’s Only Son die at their hands.

Acts 4, verse 28 is another way, another text of Holy Scripture, to help us grasp what we have focused on all week: by God’s free will He predestines everyone who lives and everything that comes to pass. I submit this to you for your reflection, discussion, and prayer. And there is one other insight I want to share. It is insightful and a teaching point for us that the early Christians soaked their prayers in good theology. I remind you this was said in prayer.

What is the content of our prayers? Is our intercession before the Lord soaked in Scripture, Bible words like predestined? May it be that the Bible and the teaching of the Bible seeps down so deep and wide into our conscience, our thoughts, our inner persons such that we find ourselves praying the words of God. And are we willing to say to God, “In my life, do whatever Your hand and Your purpose has predestined to occur.” Will we not just accept, but will we also seek God’s will be done in us?

Let’s pray. God, our Father in heaven, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your predestination of us from before the foundation of the world. Help us, O please give us the grace and the wisdom to understand this great doctrine. Help us to reflect on what we have learned today and all this week. Apply this to our lives. And bring us back safely, together, on Monday to continue as we turn now to our free will. Give us a blessed weekend, together with other Christians, worshiping and praising You our risen and ascended Lord. You have risen indeed. Amen.

Thanks for being with us today, and be sure and join us again on Monday because God Is!

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