

Series: God Saves #1454

Title: Romans 8.29b

The Purpose of Foreknowledge and Predestination

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 make a slight turn today, forward in our text of Romans chapter 8 and verse 29, as we come to these next two phrases of great interest to us and importance for us. It is not that we just drop predestination – our subject for the last several weeks - like throwing a brick into a lake, and we watch as it sinks to the bottom, gone and forgotten. No, no. Predestination, and foreknowledge before that, remain in our thoughts, but we move on in the sense that we pick up what the Apostle Paul says next.

Before we get to these next two phrases, let me read for us the full context of Romans 8, verses 28-30. I am in Romans 8, beginning in verse 28 and I read from the New American Standard Bible (the NASB), **“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”**

We are making our way, slowly, through these verses and today we find ourselves in the second half of verse 29. Now verse 29 begins, “For those whom [God] foreknew (we talked about God’s foreknowledge), [God] also predestined (we talked about God’s predestination) *to* and then this first phrase, “*to become conformed to the image of His Son...*” second phrase, “so that He [meaning Christ] would be the firstborn among many brethren...” So, to be clear, beginning today we will look at two phrases in verse 29. The first is “*to become conformed to the image of His Son...*” And the second is, “so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...”

Do capture what Paul the Apostle does here. He says there is a purpose for God’s foreknowledge and there is a purpose for God’s predestination. And that purpose is that those whom God has foreknown and those whom God has predestined *be* conformed to the image of God’s Son (Jesus) so that Jesus will be the firstborn among many brethren. It is crucial that we understand those whom God foreknows and predestines *are* those who are saved and therefore *are* going to heaven when we die or will be raptured by Christ when He appears. Foreknowledge and predestination do have to do with salvation, as we affirmed repeatedly here on *God Is*.

However, our salvation is *not* a mere ticket to heaven. There is a very definite purpose for why God has foreknown us, predestined us, and saved us. And this purpose is not about *us*, but about Him! Ah, once again we come back to the glory of God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The ultimate purpose of our salvation is that Christ be preeminent! Yes, if you are genuinely saved, you are bound for heaven. Thank God for that. But did you know your salvation reflects a greater purpose – the glory of your Savior!

To get at this, let’s take up a couple of words from our text and find out what they mean. The first is the word “conformed.” The Greek word for conformed means to bring to the same form with some other person or thing; it means to render like. We can say to be like someone else in form; to bring into the same form as someone else. But here’s the key: it means an outward expression of an *inward* essence or nature. That is what Greek language scholar Kenneth S. Wuest says. He adds, “Thus, in the process of sanctification, the saint is transformed in his inner heart life to resemble the Lord Jesus, which inner change results in a change of outward expression that reflects the beauty of the Lord Jesus (*Wuest’s Word Studies Romans*, 145.)”

Let me lay a little of that on your busy mind again. To be conformed is an outward expression of an inward essence or nature. Our inner heart life is transformed to resemble Jesus. These changes within result in changes of outward expression that reflects the beauty of Christ.

You see, we have to be transformed from the inside-out. When we are conformed to Christ on the inside, that will be evident on the outside. This is why the Holy Spirit is constantly working on the inside of the Christian man and woman. He is busily making us conform to Jesus. And, over time, that inner change is observable on the outside.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, “ ‘Con’ means ‘together with’; ‘form’ is the appearance which something or someone has. In other words it means to ‘render like,’ to be like someone else in form, to bring into the same form as someone else...It does not mean a mere superficial likeness or conformity to the form. It means an inward likeness and conformity. It is not something on the surface, it is down in the depths. That is to say it is a likeness of essence, and not a mere similarity (*Romans 8.17-39, 223*).”

When we are conformed to the image of God’s Son, we have an inward likeness to Christ. We possess a likeness of essence with Jesus. Please note this: we are not merely similar to Him. We are just like Him. Pastor Lloyd-Jones again, “We are told, therefore, that we are to be ‘made conformable to,’ ‘to be like unto’ the Son of God in our inward essence. We are to [have]...His likeness in our very nature and, indeed, in the whole of our personality (223).”

Wow. I cannot speak for you, but I can speak for myself and say I have a long way to go! For me to be conformed to Christ, the Holy Spirit has much work to do within me. But I am assured that He *is* doing this and He *will* do this. I gain this assurance from this verse. This reminds me of Philippians 1, verse 6, “**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**” And this makes me want to pray, “Holy Spirit please transform me on the inside such that my very nature, the whole of my personality, will conform to Christ my Lord. I want His essence to be my essence.” This can be considered a dangerous prayer to pray, because of what the Spirit will do within me by answering it, nevertheless I pray it. Don’t you, for yourself? Maybe for me also! Hey, I need your prayers!

OK, this first word is “conformed.” And now let’s look at a second, similar word, and that is “image.” We see that in this same phrase, “to be conformed to the image of His Son...” This word image means more than likeness. It means a “derived likeness.” It is not an accidental likeness, but a derived likeness. The Greek word is *eikon* and it is used here and in, for example, Matthew 22, verse 20 to describe the king’s head on a coin. You might remember a coin, a denarius, is brought to Jesus and He asks, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they say, “Caesar’s.” That image of Caesar is on the coin.

To modernize this, pick up a quarter and look at the heads side of it. You will see the image of George Washington. Google Washington and see how much that quarter actually, really does look like him. Or, King Charles III was recently crowned King. And I saw the stamps are now a spitting image of him. And his image will go on the money over in England as well. This is an exact image. The coin and the stamp are derived likeness of Washington and Charles.

In ancient Greek, Plato says *eikon* is the reflection of the sun in the water. And perhaps the best illustration is that the child is an image of his or her parents. The likeness of the child is a derived likeness. Let’s take a father and his son. We know the father and are well acquainted with what he looks like and then one day we meet his son. *Wow!* We are stunned and exclaim, “There is an exact likeness. He looks just like him! He’s a spittin’ image of his Dad.” (Pardon, again, my Irish!) “A spittin’ image,” my Mom, who comes from Northern Ireland, used to say that.

This is no accidental likeness. There is another Greek word meaning “an image,” but that word describes more of a resemblance not a derived likeness. For example, you could have a son that only resembles his father, or an egg that is like another egg, or two flowers that look very much alike, but these are an accidental likeness, not a derived likeness.

I have more to say about this, but that clock goes tick-tock while I talk, and so we will have to pick these words up again tomorrow. We are out of time. I hope you see where we are going and will join us again next time because God Is.

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