



As Paul nears the end of the doctrinal section of Romans, his thoughts begin to soar like the climax of a symphony. As he contemplates the glory to come, he describes God's great overall plan, from eternity past to eternity future, and how it affects those who believe.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Verse 28 has often been misused as a trite spiritual catch-all to minimize a person's real pain or to give a quick answer to difficult problems. Does verse 28 teach that all things are good?

What does it teach? How would you paraphrase it?

Verses 29-30. These two verses have been called the "Golden Chain" of theology in that in them Paul reveals God's eternal plan of salvation. They contain some heavy-duty terms that are crucial to understanding God's "purpose" as stated in verse 28. Look each of them up in a Bible dictionary and give a *definition*:


1. "*foreknew*"
2. "*predestined*"

3. "*called*"


Charles Spurgeon once said that there are two kinds of "callings", a general and a specific, like two kinds of lightning, sheet lightning and a lightning bolt. Which kind of call does Paul refer to here?

4. "*justified*"

5. "*glorified*"

 **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.** Make a list of all the things God does for us in that passage. How many things does it say we do in order to become Christians? What is faith called in verse 8?

 **Read 1 Peter 1:1-2.** How does Peter's teaching compare to Paul's?

 **Read John 6:44 and 15:16.** How does Jesus' teaching compare to what Paul is saying here?

LIFE RESPONSE: What Does it Mean to Me?

Many of the ideas dealt with in this passage are difficult. Here are a few helps in terms of definition:

- **Foreknew** = “whom He set regard upon, or whom He knew from eternity with affection and delight, whom He foreloved - (this implies a relationship which God initiated, not just “He knew ahead of time that they would have faith”)
see Acts 2:23, 26:5, Rom 11:2, 1 Pet 1:2, 20, 2 Pet 3:17
- **Predestination** = “to determine beforehand; that which God has determined will happen.” How is predestination used in the NT? What has God “determined beforehand” in each of these passages?
see Acts 4:28, 1 Cor 2:7, Eph 1:5 and 11
- **Sovereignty of God** = “God’s absolute right to govern all things as He chooses, without any limitations imposed by circumstances or human choices. While the Bible does not use the term *sovereignty*, it clearly teaches the concept of God’s complete dominion over the universe.”
see Isaiah 45:9-19, Rom. 9:19-21, Psalm 115:3, Eph. 1:11
- **Election** = *the sovereign choice of God*. God is free to act as He chooses. Why did God choose Israel? Because He wanted to. (Deut 7:7-9) No human act or attitude influences God to act as He does. Thus, election is not evidence of favoritism, but proof of God’s love and mercy. For example... when Jesus told his disciples Jn 15:16, He was not belittling their choice to follow Him, but rather he was emphasizing the fact that God is the initiator. It was God who reached out in love to draw the disciples into a relationship with Christ which would make their lives fruitful.” (Revell Bible Dictionary)

“The Biblical picture of a totally sovereign God alienates some people, but it should comfort the believer who remembers this: the way power is exercised depends on the character of the person holding it. And the God of Scripture, who has all power, is a God of love, justice, grace, and goodness. God will never do anything that violates His own character; thus, He and He alone can be trusted with the freedom of action He alone has.”

Revell Bible Dictionary

Why do you think God, through Paul, chose to reveal His eternal plan here at this point in Romans? Obviously it opens up a can of worms in a lot of people’s minds, and Paul does not spend much space explaining it? Did he write it to satisfy our intellectual curiosity or to encourage us in some way? How could this knowledge about God’s plan be an encouragement to you in your daily life?

Martin Luther

“I believe in Jesus Christ. What does it concern me, whether or not I am predestined? He has given us ground to stand on, that is, Jesus Christ, and through him we may climb to heaven.

Do you doubt if you are chosen? Then say your prayers and you may conclude that you are.”

C.S. Lewis

“When it comes to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him.”

John Murray

“In extending encouragement and support to the people of God in their sufferings and adversities, groanings and infirmities, the apostle has reached this triumphant conclusion. He has shown how the present pilgrimage of the people of God falls into its place in the undefeatable plan of God that is bounded by two things: the sovereign love of God in His eternal counsel and the glorification with Christ in the age to come. It is when we apprehend by faith this panorama ... that the sufferings of the present time are viewed in their true perspective and are seen to be the circumstances of a pilgrimage to a glory so great in its weight that the tribulations are not worthy of comparison.”