

Romans (8:30)

Called and Culled

Part 38 – June 5, 2005

RECAPPING ROMANS 8:29

Last week we tackled the paradox of predestination:



Calvinists say that our decisions are *caused* by God in order for him to preserve his sovereign control over destiny.



Arminians say that our decisions are *uncaused* by God in order for him to preserve man's freedom to choose his own destiny.

Problem is, both sides have ample supporting scriptures that seem paradoxical and confusing to the other side. The question we attempted to answer was: how can God control (predestine) history while preserving free choice? Or, how can an outcome be *simultaneously* caused and uncaused?

We must look at that outcome from two different perspectives. In a police sting from the cops' perspective the outcome is carefully orchestrated and *caused*. But From the crook's perspective the outcome is *uncaused* (or else it's entrapment).

So, by orchestrating every circumstance and armed with foreknowledge of every decision, God can *cause* every detail of destiny – AND - do so by using the *uncaused* decisions of man!

For those God foreknew he also predestined ... – Romans 8:29 NIV

Today we read perhaps the most dreaded verse of the Arminians:

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. – Romans 8:30 NIV

See the word: "called"? Some say this verse teaches that there's a special call to those "predestined" (elected) by God for salvation. Jesus said: "Many are invited but few are chosen." (*Mat 22:14*) This call (they say) is a "confirming call," because everyone who gets this special call is "justified" and "glorified".

But, it is a critical mistake to assign a teaching to a passage that was not intended by its Spirit-inspired author.

THE ETERNAL PRESENT

This is *not* an exhaustive examination of the salvation process. Do you know how we can be absolutely sure about this? There are a couple missing “Pauline taught” elements. *Little* things, like: faith, repentance, and devotion!

Q: Why would Paul leave such obvious items out of this list?

A: Simple; Paul’s only describing *God’s role* in the process.

He’s summing up the point he’s been making since verse 18: Creation is so broken and suffering, it groans. And believers are so limited and frail, they groan. **HOWEVER!** The Spirit guides, assists, and intercedes (prays) for us, and God works in every circumstance to conform us to Christ. And in the end, God’s glory will be revealed *in us!*

... our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. – Romans 8:18 NIV

But how can I have assurance *that’s* gonna happen? By examining God’s divine pieces of the equation. Verse 30 reveals the four things that God has accomplished and established for us that are impossible to achieve on our own.

1. He has “predestined” every situation and circumstance.

We experience space in three dimensions (a line, a plane, a cube); but we experience *time* in only one dimension (a line). Do you think that God is confined to one dimension of time? What if God experiences *time* in three dimensions (or more)?

- 1D. Take our time line (beginning; end; my birth; my death).
- 2D. Now picture people praying up to God throughout history.
- 3D. Now wrap the line around a ball and connect the prayers.

This is God in three dimensions of time; His throne would sit in the “eternal present,” viewing every possible permutation of human choice (and its consequence) as a cohesive whole. At creation, God would have instant access to, and awareness of (foreknowledge) an infinite number of variables. He could ensure that every person was placed in situation after situation in such a way that their freely made decisions would carry out and confirm his divine and sovereign purpose. There is an earthly dimension *and* an eternal dimension.

If a cat runs into the road while I’m driving, I didn’t create the options available to me. But I decide whether to swerve or not. If there’s oncoming traffic; if it’s raining, or snowing; if it’s a dark cat at night, or a bright cat in daylight; if I’m in a 22nd century hovercraft or a 1612 oxcart; if I was bitten by a mean ol’ cat as a youngster ... this is all God’s domain. But, swerve or *rum-frump!* ... that’s me!

- God creates the options – we make the decisions

And he certainly influences our decisions. Especially salvation; that's a decision we can NOT make on our own. In our "fallen" condition we must rely on God to open our eyes to two realities:

- A. His holiness and provision
- B. Our depravity and poverty

2. This is a wake-up "call" that *only* God can make.

Picture yourself floating *unconscious* on the open sea. Your ship has been sunk. You're surrounded by unconscious shipmates. The captain who sank your ship calls out to wake everyone. You have no power to save yourself; you can't even wake yourself up and see the *options* without the captain's *call*. He invites you to surrender and board his ship for safety. He promises you amnesty, and offers you medical treatment. There are not a lot of options; you are *dead in the water*. Still, some would rather drown than surrender. And though the captain has the *power* to save everyone, out of respect for *their* wishes, he "chooses" only those who respond to his invitation. The apostle John arranged the list this way in Revelation:

... with [the Lord] will be his called, chosen and faithful followers. – Revelation 17:14 NIV

CALLED AND CHOSEN

I strongly oppose the notion that Paul is teaching a *special, irresistible* call, only given to those who've been *pre-selected*. This passage wasn't written so we could argue predestination; it was written to assure us, all things are in God's control. Later in Romans, Paul himself says:

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. – Romans 10:13 NIV

- So, obviously there's a return call involved!

Let's go to the passage where Jesus talks about those who are invited (called) and those who are chosen. It's in a parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. – Matthew 22:2-3 NIV

He tries to convince them, but they pay no attention, and even kill his messengers. So, he sends an army to destroy them.

Then he said to his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. "Friend," he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, "Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are invited, but few are chosen." - Matthew 22:8-14 NIV

Q: Who was ultimately invited to this celebration?

A: "Anyone [they could] find," "both good and bad"

There are two reasons given as to why some were not chosen:

- A. They ignored their invitation, and rejected the king.
- B. They came with their own agenda (offensive clothing).

Jesus said *this* is what the kingdom of heaven is like; God invites; some respond appropriately; and they're chosen. In fact, the ones pre-selected, pre-chosen, and given a *special* invitation ended up losing out and being destroyed!

So, back to those four things that only God can do: Only God can predestine every situation for my good. Only God can awaken me to my need and his provision. And when we *do* recognize our need, and his sufficiency, we don't have the power to live up to his standard of holiness.

3. It's only through Christ's sacrifice, we are "justified".

He acquitted us of our "war crimes" and brought us "on board" as though we had never been enemies. Remember? It's "just-if-I'd" never sinned! And even after we're forgiven and "cleaned up," we don't have the ability to conform ourselves into the image of Christ.

4. So, those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also "glorified"

Q: Why is this in past tense?

A: Because if you've been justified, you're in an established process (called sanctification) with an inevitable outcome.

- And from God's throne (His perspective) it's a done deal!