

Here we have one of those passages that has caused some issues. In the past even this church has had fights and divisions over the concepts within these verses.

Some rules for investigating passages like this.

Ask some questions.

1. What is the context of this passage?
2. What did say to the original readers?
3. What does it say to me right now?
4. Why has it caused so much issue?

While we aren't going to deal specifically with those questions, keep them in the back of your mind.

The way I will deal with the passage is to deal with the passage first and foremost rather than the side issues.

So here we go.

RO 8:28 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.

One of the easy things with this verse is to take it out of its place in the chapter. Just preceding this is a passage about how The Holy Spirit intercedes for us within our prayer life. If you notice the verse starts with an and. And we know. It follows on from

RO 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.

The connection is important for us to get a grip on. God works through His Holy Spirit to work things for good.

What is the meaning of "all things"? It most likely refers to those things that, while themselves adverse, are turned to good account by the sovereign God working on our behalf. This line of thought agrees with 5:3-5 as well as with the mention of sufferings and opposition in the present chapter.

The "good" is not defined, but should be sought in the intended conformity to God's Son. If our main aim in life is to become like Christ then we need to take this passage as one that indicates that sufferings, persecutions etc can be used by God to hone us and sharpen us to His benefit.

Notice too that this verse is specific, those who God works things for good are those who love Him – or those who have that right relationship with Him.

Here we come up against the first word that creates some issues. The word called. The "called" are not those who are merely invited to respond to the proclamation of the Gospel; they are called according to God's purpose. Notice - ***who have been called according to his purpose.***

What's a calling??

- 1. Christ call is to all.***
- 2. Specific call to be one of His own***
- 3. An even more specific call to ministry (All Christians are called to a ministry)***
- 4. An even more specific call to some for a narrower more defined ministry eg mission, pastoral etc)***

It is my belief All Christians are called to be Christian first and foremost, called to a ministry and called to obedience to Christ.

What's this about a purpose?

God's will.

This concept is explained by one of the most debated statements in church history.

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.

This calling is further explained in terms of foreknowledge "foreknew" and predestination (v. 29).

Foreknew is not about advance awareness of someone or something;

it refers to God's choice, his electing decision.

God's calling is not a haphazard thing, nor is it something cold and formal. It is filled with the warmth of love.

Observe also that we are called according to God's purpose, not according to his foreknowledge. I think all Christians are called to a ministry. In light of this His purpose is that we work for God's kingdom.

Too many people make an issue over predestined to salvation, I don't think that this is what the passage is all about.

What we are predestined and foreknown to do?

That is to become like Jesus.

If "predestined" stood by itself without any amplification, one might conclude that only an action by God is involved whereby one is chosen to salvation. Even if this is your theology, there is much more here than just that. The remainder of the sentence indicates otherwise, pointing to much more than deliverance from sin and death.

We are foreknown and predestined to become more and more like Jesus.

Notice the progression here, called, foreknown, predestined, justified and then glorified.

It is kind of like his statement "That God's will for us is not static, but a fluid progression within His sovereign will."

God's will from the beginning of time is that we become like Jesus.

The background is the adoption concept, but now presented not as in v. 15 (where it is related to the Father and the Spirit) but as related to the Son. Paul presents two aspects of this conformity. By a sharing in the sufferings of Christ by developing along with the Spirit's help the mind of Christ, the believer is gradually being made into his likeness. This is the essence of sanctification. Last week I asked the question was sanctification a process or a right now thing. To sanctify means to make holy. I feel this is an on going process in the life of the believer.

These terms, foreknow, predestine, call, justify and glorify makes us aware that the processes of God's love for us did not start when we became aware of it. God's love for us was before we understood His love, God's love for us was even before our existence. The fact that God knew in advance what will and has happened to us shows that. Notice it says that He foreknew – He predestined. He works with us on our journey of discovery of God.

Now I don't care whether you call yourself a Calvinist, An Arminian, or whether you believe in double predestination of free choice, whether you think you are supralapsarian or infralapsarian or whether you are Reformed or free evangelical.

This verse tells us that God's love is outside of our concept of total understanding.

A while ago I discovered a great word.

Apophatic.

This means that **something is outside of our realm of understand**. Apophatic theology is a theology that says we really can't understand the fullness of God. I agree with that. Apophatic theology also states that human words or communication forms are inadequate to communicate God. (Note: Not communicate to God as He can fully understand His creation – we can be fully understood by God, but we cannot fully understand God) I don't totally agree with that.

We can totally understand what God has chosen to communicate to us!!!!

Because God used human words to reveal Himself. Anyway, enough of apophatic stuff.

God made us this way, gave us craving to do things so He could help us to achieve the ultimate potential He designed for us. He has given us everything we need to understand that we need to be in a relationship with Him. We have no excuses.

Here is something amazing. God sent his Son in our likeness (v. 3) that we might eventually be like him. Verse 30 states the various steps involved in the realization of the divine purpose: the call (cf. v. 28), justification, and glorification. This is amazing, for thousands of years the church has argued over these issues and rarely has the purpose of God in justifying and glorifying His people been emphasized.

God's purpose in all this is our benefit.

Remember the passage is about sufferings and persecutions that we mentioned last week. Persecutions of death, imprisonment for just being a christian. God is going to make it good, God is going to use the suffering and perscution and use it for good. and explains the bigger picture in it all. Our future glorification. Glory – good word this – Doxa – My trusty Greek lexicon gives us some perspective. We translate it **glory**. The more defined meanings are **– brightness, splendor and radiance or the state of being in that radiance or magnificence or fame, renown and honour.** These definitions give us a big picture that we are going to be treated pretty special by God. We are going to be in a state of radiance, we will be renowned as Christlike we will have amazing honour. These are words and concepts we are told to give to God but He is giving it back.

THAT IS HIS PURPOSE!!!!!!