

*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. **Romans 8:29-30 KJV***

Once in a while someone defending John Calvin will challenge me, “*Yeah, well what about Romans 8:29-30?*” By throwing one verse out as a defense or justification the Calvinist is caught in the same snare as they are with other verses they use to defend Calvinism. The trap is they do not put the verses in context of the current dialog of the passage being quoted, much less in the entirety of the scriptures. They just focus on one word and shout “*See? See? Explain that one away!*” It is always dangerous to create doctrine from individual verses taken out of context from the rest of the passage and the Scriptures as a whole.

For example, if one quotes Romans 8:29-30, to keep everything together, one should really start with verse 28:

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. **Romans 8:28 KJV***

We know from the entirety of the Scriptures that the *call* has gone out to the whole world. We also know that Christ died for all. The *called* are those who respond, of their own free will, to accept, to submit, and to *love* God. Everyone has received an invitation, but not everyone has accepted or acted on that invitation.

Christ clearly tells us who the *called* are. See *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet* in Matthew 22:2-14 and *The Parable of the Great Banquet* in Luke 14: 15-24.

J. Vernon McGee’s “*Illustration of the turtle*” is another way to show who the *called* are:

“Suppose you go down to a swamp, and there are ten turtles. You say to the turtles, “I’d like to teach you to fly.” Nine of them say, “We’re not interested. We like it down here; we feel comfortable in this environment.” One turtle says, “Yes, I’d like to fly.” That is the one which is called, and that is the one which is taught to fly. Now that doesn’t have anything in the world to do with the other turtles. They are turtles because they are turtles. My friend, the lost are lost because they want it that way.” —J. Vernon McGee’s *Thru The Bible* commentary on Romans.

Paul shows that God calls us but we must be *worthy*. Worthy how? By accepting the *call* by *faith*. Once we accept the call we have the grace that makes us worthy. Notice Paul tells is that it is our *faith* that prompts, or sets in motion, God's giving us the power to fulfill our purpose (in other words faith is a condition) :

*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. **2 Thessalonians 1:11***

If we were predestined to accept God's calling, with no choice in accepting the call, then the concern about being found *worthy* would NEVER be a worry.

Now getting back to Romans 8:29-30, in verse 29 “*For whom he did foreknow...*” Two things here: First, the word “*For*” is referring to verse 28. Second, Calvinists get hung up on the word *foreknow*. *Foreknow* or *foreknew* does not mean *fore-loved*, at least not the way Calvinists intend it. After all we know that God loves all of His creation and all the people He created. By this passage, or any passage, Paul is not saying that anyone is elected to be lost but rather he is pointing out in this passage the *called* are those who accepted the invitation, and those who accept this invitation are saved because of God's plan of salvation that was predestined. *Predestination* is based upon *foreknowledge* of God and His plan for us based on that foreknowledge. Its object, predestination, is not salvation, but conformity to the image of Christ for those who freely believe.

Henry Ironside explains Romans 8:29-30 this way:

Turn to your Bible and read for yourself in the only two chapters in which this word predestinate or predestinated is found. The first is Romans 8:29-30, the other chapter is Ephesians 1:5 and 11. You will note that there is no reference in these four verses to either heaven or hell but to Christ-likeness eventually. Nowhere are we told in scripture that God predestinated one man to be saved and another to be lost. Men are to be saved or lost eternally because of their attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Predestination means that someday all the redeemed shall become just like the Lord Jesus.

H.A. Ironside, *Full Assurance* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1937), 93-94

Those that God *predestined* means He predestined for Glory those who would accept him.

Whom he did predestinate, etc.—The Gentiles, whom He determined to call into his Church with the Jewish people, He called—He invited by the preaching of the Gospel, to believe on his Son Jesus Christ. —*Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Romans 8:30

Romans 8:29-30 tells us what the promise is if we believe and accept His invitation, as do many other verses in the Scriptures. Never does *election* or *predestination* refer to salvation, but always and only to particular benefits which is Christlikeness.

*Predestination...simply means that God has predetermined that those who respond affirmatively to His call...will be justified...and furthermore will be glorified. All this is 'according to His purpose'...* Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fundamentals of our Faith*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1960), 94-99

John Wesley wrote of Romans 8:29-30: ***On Predestination by John Wesley Sermon 58***

‘...And, First, let us look forward on the whole work of God in the salvation of man; considering it from the beginning, the first point, till it terminates in glory. The first point is, the foreknowledge of God. God foreknew those in every nation, those who would believe, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. But, in order to throw light upon this dark question, it should be well observed, that when we speak of God's foreknowledge, we do not speak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For, if we speak properly, there is no such thing as either foreknowledge or afterknowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity, (for the children of men,) being present to him at once, he does not know one thing in one point of view from everlasting

to everlasting. As all time, with everything that exists therein, is present with him at once, so he sees at once, whatever was is, or will be, to the end of time. But observe: We must not think they are because he knows them. No: he knows them because they are.”<snip>

“Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” This is the Second step: (To speak after the manner of men: For in fact, there is nothing before or after in God:) In other words, God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, shall be conformed to his image; shall be saved from all inward and outward sin, into all inward and outward holiness. Accordingly, it is a plain undeniable fact all who truly believe in the name of the Son of God do now “receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls;” and this in virtue of the unchangeable, irreversible, irresistible decree of God, -- “He that believeth shall be saved;” “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” [The whole sermon can be read at <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/58/>]

It should be clear from the above that Reformed Theology has purposefully skewed words like *predestination*, *called*, *elect* and other words for their benefit. As pointed out by Jerry Walls and Joseph Dongell:

“Paul observes that all Christians who have been glorified have of course been foreknown, predestined, called and justified. As James Dunn suggests:

“Paul is not inviting reflection on the classic problems of determinism and free will, or thinking in terms of a decree which excludes as well as one which includes.... His thought is simply that from the perspective of the end, it will be evident that history has been the stage for the unfolding of Gods purpose, the purpose of the Creator fulfilling his original intentions in creating.”

James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 486.

[The certainty of salvation] does not rest on the fact that the church belongs to a certain “number,” but that it belongs to Christ, from before the foundation of the world. Fixity does not lie in a hidden *decretum*, therefore, but in the corporate unity of the Church with Christ, whom it has come to know in the gospel and has learned to embrace in faith.

Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 350-51.

Walls and Dongell, *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, InterVarsity Press, pages 81-86.

It should be clear then that the word *predestinate* or any form of the word does not even remotely hint as God predetermining who would have eternal life with Him or suffer eternal damnation because He willed it just because He could. Predestination clearly refers to God’s plan for salvation of those who freely accept God’s gift. Now if you want to quote Paul in Romans try:

*That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

**Romans 10:9–13**

Note: it has been asked of me many times, “how can you deny *predestination* when it is used so many times in the Bible?” For these people who have not actually looked it up, here you are:

Predestine	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=0	NASB=0
Predestinate	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=2*	NASB=0
Predestinate	NIV=0	NKJV=0	KJV=0	NASB=0
Predestined	NIV=4*	NKJV=4*	KJV=0	NASB=0

\* = None of the references were in the Old Testament or in the Gospels. In the case of the KJV the word is only in one chapter in Romans and in the case of both the NIV and the NKJV it is only used in one chapter in Romans and one chapter in Ephesians.