

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – May 15, 2015

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Life Through the Spirit (con't again!)

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 through wordless groans.* ²⁷ *And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

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 image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* ³⁰ *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

More Than Conquerors

³¹ *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ³² *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* ³³ *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.* ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written:*

*"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*

³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Foreknew, Predestined, Called, Justified, Glorified

- 1) This week we will endeavor to comprehend the powerful promises of God spoken by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by Paul in Romans 8:28-30.
- 2) We continue our study of these amazing five words of promise with an in-depth probe of predestination and what Holy Scripture has to say about it in relation to us, namely:
 - a) God desires the salvation of all, not only the salvation of the "elect."
 - b) God's sovereignty includes free will, but does not determine it for you or me.

Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials**
(1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
 - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
 - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
 - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
 - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
 - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
 - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
 - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
 - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
 - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
 - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
 - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
 - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
 - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
 - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
 - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
 - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
 - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
 - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
 - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

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- c) God provides grace to all, though not all accept it.
- d) God's *foreknowledge* (to know in advance) is not the same as *predetermination* (to settle or decide in advance).

The Meaning of Predestination

- 1) Predestined is *proorizō* in Greek, and it means "to predetermine, decide beforehand, and of God decreeing from eternity."
- 2) The word is found in only two places in Holy Scripture – the passage in Romans that we are presently studying and Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11.
- 3) Predestination does **not** mean that some are predetermined to be lost and others are predetermined to be saved. After all, we know that God loves all of His creation and all the people that He created.
 - a) *In love⁵ He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.* (Ephesians 1:5)
 - b) *¹¹ In Him we were also chosen [or "made heirs"], having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.* (Ephesians 1:11)
- 4) Paul is saying that Gentiles (i.e. those who are not part of God's covenant promise to Israel) were also predestined by God to participate in God's plan of salvation. The Romans to whom this letter is addressed were mostly Gentiles. They too, like you and I, were predestined to participate in God's plan of salvation from the beginning in God's mercy and love.
- 5) God foreknew, even when He called Abraham and entered into a covenant promise with him and his posterity that those outside of the covenant relationship promised to the Jews would also be included in God's plan of mercy and redemption.
- 6) This would have been an offense to the Jews of Paul's day, who considered all Gentiles (i.e. non-Jews) to be unclean sinners beyond the reach of God's mercy. After all, only the Jews were "God's chosen people."
- 7) Paul is not saying that anyone is elected to be lost but rather that those who accept God's invitation are saved because God's plan of salvation was predestined.
- 8) Hence, in God's plan of salvation, those who use their free will to freely believe are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. This is by grace and it is a free gift offered to all but not all choose to accept it.
- 9) Furthermore, it gives God pleasure to include us in the plan of salvation!! It is part of His super-abundant generosity that He graciously pours out on you and me. He is a God of relentless pursuit. He wants us to want Him – but gives us the freedom to choose to want Him or not.

The Meaning of Called

- 1) We know from the entirety of Holy Scriptures that the call has gone out to whole world; Christ died for all.
- 2) "Called" in Greek is *kaleō* and it means "to invite."
- 3) In God's plan of salvation, Gentiles were predestined to be invited to participate in God's grace. Not only were Jews called, but all men and women are "called."

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- 4) The "elect" are those who respond, of their own free will, to accept God's invitation of mercy and grace. It is those who choose to submit to His lordship and to love God with their whole heart, mind, soul and strength.
- 5) Everyone has received the invitation but not everyone has accepted or acted on the invitation. Our Lord makes this clear in the parable of the wedding banquet found in Matthew 22:2-14 and the parable of the great banquet found in Luke 14:15-24.
- 6) Paul shows us that God calls us all, but we must be worthy. Worthy? How can you and I be worthy of the call? Once we accept the call by faith God supplies the grace that makes us worthy:
 - a) ¹¹ *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. ¹² We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (2 Thessalonians 1:11)
- 7) Two things are made clear: first, if we were pre-determined to accept God's calling then the concern about being found *worthy* would never be a worry. Secondly, it is God who supplies in us the power to bring about in our lives the fruition of every desire for goodness and every deed prompted by faith. This is grace!
- 8) It is these benefits of being Christ-like, which is God's gift to those who accept His invitation, and all who accept were predestined to enjoy. While God supplies the power, we must seek to cooperate with it.
- 9) Jesus, speaking to a large crowd, assumed that we would respond positively to God's gracious call and invitation. The passage known as The Beatitudes is immediately followed with this promise:
 - a) ¹⁴ *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5:14-16)
- 10) The elect are those who respond to accept God's invitation. These become "the light of the world" whose light "shines before others" that by our good deeds performed through the miracle of grace will cause others to glorify our Father in heaven. Believers are known by our good deeds, *not* justified on account of them.
- 11) Showing further proof that predestination refers to God's plan of salvation and not to pre-selection of which man or woman would respond to God's invitation, Paul writes later in Romans:
 - a) ⁹ *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Romans 10:9-13)

The Meaning of Justified

- 1) "Justified" in Greek is *dikaioō* and it means "to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous." It is a legal term of Paul's day and refers to being acquitted by a rightfully appointed court of law.
- 2) Paul makes more use of the word and the legal concept it represents than do the other writers of the New Testament; indeed for him justification it is the characteristic way of referring to the central truth of the Gospel. The word conveys certain clarity concerning God's amazing love and mercy in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- 3) This does not mean that Paul has a different understanding of the Gospel; rather that the death of Christ on the cross has opened a way of salvation for sinners:
 - a) He says, "*Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*" (Romans 5:19)

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- b) We should not understand "*were made sinners*" in any such sense as "were compelled to be sinners."
 - c) Paul is saying that the whole human race is caught up in the effect of Adam's sin; now all are sinners.
- 4) Paul speaks of God "*who justifies the wicked*" (Romans 4:5): We have not merited our salvation, rather, we who had no claim on salvation have been made "*justified*" (i.e. made righteous) by Jesus Christ's obedience.
 - 5) It was "*while we were still sinners*" that Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) But the effect of Christ's saving work is that now all believers are "*made righteous*," that is you and I are "accepted by God as righteous" not because of any meritorious act on our part, but simply because God imputes the righteousness of His Son on you and me, indeed, upon all who believe on Jesus Christ. Justification is the *effect* of faith.
 - 6) The Old Testament hints at this eternal truth, but it isn't given full expression until the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, our Lord:
 - a) Holy Scripture made clear that sin is universal, but that God provides forgiveness:
 - i) "*All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*" (Psalm 14:3)
 - ii) When God looks down from heaven He sees that "*they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*" (Psalm 53:2-3)
 - iii) "*If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness.*" (Psalm 130:3-4)
 - iv) The end of Micah's prophecy emphasizes that God is a God "*who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of His inheritance*" and that He "*delights to show mercy.*" (Micah 7:18-20)
 - b) Sometimes in the Old Testament we find the thought that God imputes righteousness to certain people:
 - i) He did this to Abraham, who believed God "*and He credited it to him as righteousness.*" (Genesis 15:6)
 - ii) Phinehas took decisive action so that the plague was checked and "*This was credited to him as righteousness.*" (Psalm 106:30 -31 referring to Numbers 25:6-9)
 - 7) Paul insists that we are *not* justified by what we *do*. Justification is the result of new life infused in us when we believe. God is the One who infuses this new life in us. We are justified by faith.
 - 8) Whereas Paul says quite plainly that justification is by faith and not by works, James holds that "*a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*" (James 2:24)
 - a) If we look more closely at what James says we see that he is not arguing for works in the absence of faith, but rather for works as the evidence of faith. "*Show me your faith without deeds,*" he writes, "*and I will show you my faith by what I do.*" (James 2:18)
 - b) James is sure that saving faith transforms the believer so that good works necessarily follow as an expression of our new life in Christ; and he complains about people who say they have faith, but whose manner of living shows quite plainly that they have not been saved.

Discussion Questions

- 1) The Jews of Paul's day consider the Gentiles to be "unclean" and beyond the promise of God's love. Who do I view as being "unclean" – unworthy of God's love?
- 2) What is my understanding of being "called?" How have I experienced God's call, if at all?
- 3) In what ways has my life been made to be different on account of my faith? St. James calls such differences in our conduct, attitudes and manner of living those certain "*works*" by which our light shines before others to the praise and glory of God. How is this true in my life?