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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Predestination in Romans.

(2013)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Predestination in Romans.

Topics.

- Predestination (Rom. 8:29-30) (who God foreknew He also predestined).
 - Predestination (Rom. 9:12) (the older will serve the younger).
 - Predestination (Rom. 11:1-3) (has God rejected His people who He foreknew).
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Romans 8:29-30

Who God Foreknew He also Predestined.

Romans 8:29-30 ----- ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

There is no-doubt that at first glance this passage does sound like Paul is teaching that God has predestined certain people to be saved, but we know that this idea is against other teaching of Scripture so what is Paul saying? To help understand this we need to focus on the key word i.e., foreknew and take a brief overview before beginning our spiritual journey in greater depth. God is eternal in mind and eternal foreknowledge and wisdom already knows the end game for our lives and for the history of all mankind.

Paul is not saying that God programs certain people to be saved and others to be condemned, but that God does know by His eternal foreknowledge who will respond to the call of the Good News of the Gospel and that God has predestined that those who do respond will be justified, and glorified and that God has predestined that those in Christ should be made into the image and likeness of God's Son (now in character and behavior) and in eternity joint heirs with him.

Paul's focus in these verses is upon being made in the likeness and image of Christ not upon being saved or condemned.

A brief overview of Salvation: -

- A sinner responds to the Gospel call.
- They are baptized into Christ.
- God chooses and justifies them to be an adopted child in His Kingdom because of their faith in His Son.

It is predestined that those in Christ should be conformed to the image of God's Son (in character and behavior) and that God will glorify those in Christ at the resurrection and that they will be joint heirs with Christ in eternal glory.

Foreknew: means to know a thing beforehand.

Predestined: means to declare or determine a thing in advance.

Conformed: means similarly formed by association or companionship.

Image: refers to a likeness or resemblance of a statue or profile it carries the idea of the faintness of a copy.

First-born: the expression, "The firstborn among many brethren," means two things firstly that Christ was the first to be resurrected from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory. Certainly there were men and woman who were raised from the dead during Christ's ministry on earth, but these were only raised to mortal life

whereas Christ was raised to eternal life and everlasting glory never to see the kingdom of death again. Secondly it means that Christ was raised to be the eternal King and head of all the redeemed.

Death: to God death is not as an end or darkness, but a birth into glorious light and a new life that far exceeds any life we can experience this side of death. For those in Christ it is a birth into an eternal world of majestic and royal splendour of everlasting joy and glory and of immortality and awe-inspiring wonder that we cannot imagine

Called: means to be invited, to be given an invitation and to be appointed to a task, while called according to God's purpose means called according to God's eternal plan of salvation, the call is from self, ego pride and the world to the love of God, to Christ, to grace and to right living as our aim and our endeavour. This is the Gospel call. No- one is justified but those who respond to the call, those who hear the call and reject it, stand against the Gospel call and continue to abide under guilt and death.

God has justified those who have accepted the Gospel call and the power of the law to condemn to death, is broken and the guilt of sin removed by God's justification in Christ. Nothing can come between the redemption and eternal glory of those in Christ who respond to the Gospel call and faithfully follow the Lord.

Justified: means to show and regard one as just, innocent, free, righteous and holy in character or act. It carries the idea of being acquitted and set free (for Christ's sake).

Predestine: means to determine, purpose, or decree beforehand. In this context it does not refer to eternal gifts (i.e., prophecy, miracles, ministry etc.), but to being conformed to the likeness of God's Son (in character and behaviour). Predestine and foreknow are not the same thing. Foreknow is an act of foreknowledge, or knowing something before it occurs while predestine is to set a thing in motion. We only have knowledge of the past, but God foresees the future, but not because he has decreed every detail of it, but because there are no limitations upon his eternal foreknowledge.

NOTE.

In the context of these verses the word foreknow only has reference to those who would become Christians and be saved and not to all mankind since not all have conformed to the image of God's Son. The statement "God foreknew" is an explanation of what Paul had just said, "For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (v28). God's foreknowledge here refers to God's foreknowledge of His own people meaning those who would respond to the call of salvation (Old and New Testament). As God looked into the future all those who would love Him were present to his mind these are the ones He foreknew.

In these verses Paul is saying that God when He was forming the Gospel in His eternal mind before the foundations of the world knew by His eternal foreknowledge those who would love Him. As Gods' eternal mind travelled through the future His eye was fixed on them and He regarded them as to be conformed to his Son; and that, knowing them in this manner he predestined them to eternal life according to His eternal plan of salvation that He purposed and planned in his eternal mind before the world began. Some might ask; "What did God predestine of those who would love him?"

To answer this lets first consider what God did not predestine.

God did not predestine: -

- That people should love Him.
- That people should believe.
- That some people would be saved and others damned.

If God had programmed our hearts and will before the foundations of the world to love Him and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then we have no free-will nor are we responding to God's love displayed to us by the suffering, bloody and bleeding Saviour cruelly nailed to the cross of Calvary. Rather than loving and worshipping God from a heart of gratitude and from a natural emotional response to His great love we would simply be responding as a mechanical robot (howbeit a very sophisticated one) does from an imbedded program pre-set in its memory to respond in a certain manner. It's hard to imagine that God's heart would be filled with joy when he sees the faithful worshipping and loving his Son if He knows they are pre-programmed to act in this way and therefore have no other choice.

Today our inventors can make almost life like robots that are programmed to only respond in love and kindness, but no one is going to be overwhelmed with such love since they know the robot cannot respond in any other manner which means the love though it appears real is simply the response of a very clever inventors programming. Paul is not saying God has predestined us to respond to God's love from a pre-programmed mind and heart. The primary focus is upon character and that those who God saw beforehand who would love Him and respond to the Gospel call should be conformed to the image and likeness of his Son (i.e., his good character).

The only thing predestined and foreordained is that those who love God as revealed in Christ shall become Christlike in life (i.e., in character and behaviour), and like Christ in eternity. Paul is saying that those God predestined to glory are those who God saw in His foreknowledge that would be conformed to the image of his Son and as a result of this they would be saved. The words, "God predestined," signifies God's fixed purpose flowing from His foreknowledge to call those who love Him to conform to the likeness of His Son (in character and behaviour). It is that God's people should be conformed to the likeness of his Son that God predestined beforehand. Being conformed to the image and likeness of Christ (in righteousness, humbleness, love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace and forgiveness etc.), is the mark of those who God foreknew and who God will glorify.

Since it is the predestined purpose of God that we should be conformed to the likeness of His Son the only evidence and proof we can have that we are children of God's grace and God's purposes is that we are being conformed to the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in compassion, kindness, mercy grace and forgiveness and in sharing God glorious plan of saving people. In reference to God's predestined eternal plan of salvation the foundational truth is that God foreknew us and the end of God's predestined eternal plan of salvation is that we would be joint heirs with Christ and be like him in eternal glory (Rom. 8:17).

The way in which God has predestined that His eternal plan of salvation would be accomplished is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by grace. This is the glory of Christian salvation its foundation is God's grace that He grants to every brother and sister in Christ as a pure and free gift (2 Tim. 1:9). This discussion of Paul's would prove to the Jews that the Gentiles being now called into the Kingdom of God was not an accidental thing, but a matter which God had determined when he planned and purposed the Gospel before time began. Paul here speaks as one amazed, and swallowed up in admiration, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of God which passes knowledge. The more we know of worldly things, the less we wonder; but the further we are led into the mysteries of God's eternal mind and the Gospel of Christ, the more our finite and mortal mind is left in awe and wonder.

NOTICE: Paul does not say, "All who God foreknew to be holy he predestined to be saved." God did not trust His eternal plan of salvation upon our righteousness, but upon Christ's righteousness. God's eternal plan that He set in motion before the world began rests upon grace; not self-effort or religious works. This is why God can promise His eternal plan will come to pass, because it is not dependent upon us attaining to God's perfect standard of holiness, but upon Christ's holiness. God has not left His eternal plan to the frail and fickle nature of humanity. Here is the security of Christian salvation God in his foreknowledge has designed mankind's salvation under grace not the law or human self-effort.

If we abide in God's love and God's grace and in Christ God is for us
And we can be confident we are eternally secure in our faith.

A brief overview: God being eternal and having no beginning and no end clearly has eternal foreknowledge meaning His eternal eyes can see all things to the end of time. This is why God was able to inspire the Old Testament prophets concerning future events. Paul by using the words foreknew and predestined to teaching that God predestined certain people to be saved and predestined others for destruction, but that God predestined that those who choose from their own free-will to believe in Christ should be conformed to his image. This means two things: -

1. Those in Christ should live a lifestyle that reflects the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The faithful in Christ will become joint heir with Christ in eternity.

In the context of these verses it is the type of behaviour that those in Christ should live and their eternal glory that God predestined before the beginning of the ages.

Romans 9:12

The Older will Serve the Younger.

Romans 9:12 ----- ¹²Rebecca was told, "The older will serve the younger."

God tells Rebecca the future of her twin boys before they are even born. Paul in this verse is referring to the following words of the LORD.

- The LORD said to Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." ²⁴When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob (Gen. 25:23-26).

A brief overview: Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac, Isaac took Rebecca as his wife and they gave birth to Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn but sold his birthright to Jacob who gave birth to twelve sons who became known as the twelve tribes of Israel and whose descendants became the nation of Israel. Since God has no beginning and no end His mind and his eyes are eternal which means God in His eternal foreknowledge is able to see through time (as we understand it) to the end of the age and in this eternal foreknowledge saw that Esau as a grown man would not: -

- Have the same heartfelt passion for God as Jacob did.
- Place any value on the inheritance that was due to him being the firstborn.
- Value the promise and inheritance of God.
- Show God honour (he took two Hittite women for wives contrary to the will of God).

The nation of Israel held the firstborn child in high esteem. Amongst the Jewish nation the firstborn child is highly valued because God placed many privileges upon the firstborn son. When it is understood the great value God and the Jews placed on the firstborn child Esau's heart attitude could be likened to a Christian today who understands what it cost the Father to save them and understands the enormous suffering Christ endured on the cross for them, but continue to live their life totally indifferent to how it reflects on the goodness of God and the testimony of Jesus good name. God was able to tell Rebecca before her twins were born that the older child will serve the younger because by His eternal foreknowledge He would have clearly seen that Esau not only placed no value on his inheritance as the firstborn son and that he was indifferent to how his life reflected on God, but would have also seen that Esau would give away his birthright for a plate of food.

For further information concerning predestination, see the title: -

- Potter and the Clay.
 - In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).
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Romans 11:1-2

Has God rejected His people who He Foreknew.

Romans 11:1-2 ----- ¹I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

No Christian who understands the history of God and the nation of Israel would question that the nation of Israel has been a unique nation and that they have been God's special people. The LORD has always dealt with Israel differently to any other nation. He declared His word, statutes and His rules to Israel (the LORD has not done this with any other nation). They are children of Abraham the father of faith and because they are Abraham's offspring they were entrusted with the oracles of God. To them belongs the adoption, the glory and the covenants.

Added to these God said that he gave birth to Israel and carried them from the womb even to their old age (Isaiah 46:3-4) and that He loved them when they were a child, and refers to them as his son who he called out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1). They were given the law, the worship and the promises, to them belong the patriarchs and from their race, came the Christ who is Lord over all that God created (Rom. 3:2) (Rom. 9:4-5, 7). Even more than this the LORD called Israel His treasured possession and the apple of the LORD'S eye, his allotted heritage and a people holy to Him.

(Exod. 19:5) (Deut. 7:6) (Deut. 14:2) (Deut. 26:18) (Deut. 32:9).

Paul knowing that many Jews would have been wondering if God had cast the nation of Israel aside because they were witnessing thousands of Gentiles (who the Jews at that time considered an unclean race without God) being saved and delivered into the Kingdom of God asks the question "Has God cast off Israel who He foreknew?" so that he could give an answer to what he knew many would be thinking. Paul knowing full well that all Jews would know the dramatic story of Elijah's encounter with God asks them the following question, "Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?" (v2)

Paul here is referring to the following story of Elijah and Jezebel: after Elijah had killed all the prophets of Baal and destroyed their altars Jezebel swore to have Elijah killed. Elijah in fear fled to the wilderness and while in hiding said to God, "I have been very jealous for the LORD while all the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant and I even I only am left." The LORD said to him, "Return to Damascus for I will leave seven thousand in Israel, whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouth has not kissed him" (the full story is in 1 Kings 19). Paul is using this story to show the Jews that God will never cast of those who are faithful to Him.

Earlier in this letter Paul said: -

- Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring (Rom. 9:6-8).

This means that God is not casting off His people that He foreknew because it is not the natural descendants of Abraham who are God's people, but those who had faith as Abraham the father of faith had. God has always had a chosen remnant of believing and faithful Jews, who looked by faith toward: -

- The promised seed of the woman spoken of in Genesis 3:15.
- The prophet and deliver Moses said was to come like him.
- The promised seed of Abraham and the promised seed of David.
- The appearing of Israel's Messiah the Christ and Saviour.

The faithful of the Old Testament Jews lived their life by this faith. These faithful are the true Israel of God. The Old Testament is very clear that God promised Israel a coming Messiah (the Christ) who would be a mighty King who would save them. The faithful of the Old Testament were kept by God not by works, but by faith in looking toward their promised Messiah and God's grace as faithful brothers and sisters in Christ are kept today.

The author of Hebrews shines a brilliant spotlight on the faithful, he wrote: -

- By faith Abraham (and those with him) went to receive as an inheritance and live in the land of promise, a foreign land not knowing where he was going, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise because he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).
- Many acknowledging that they were strangers and exiles on the earth left their lands seeking by faith a homeland because they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God and has prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16).
- Many received amazing miracles and saw great wonders while others suffered torture, mocking, flogging, chains of imprisonment and even death all the while refusing to accept release so that they might rise again to a better life. Many went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated of who the world was not worthy wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth and all these God commended because of their faith (Heb. 11:35-39).

There has always been a remnant of believing Jews that obtained righteousness and life by faith in believing in the promised seed of Abraham and the promised seed of David the Messiah the Christ of God and the eternal promise of God.

Paul by saying, "I also am an Israelite (Rom. 11:1) shows two things: -

1. That he himself was one of them.
2. If God was casting off all Jews Paul should also himself have been rejected by God since he was of the seed of Abraham and the tribe of Benjamin the least and youngest of all the tribes of Israel.

God chose Paul to be a chosen vessel to carry Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15) clearly showing that God has not cast off his people. Some are chosen and called and the call is made effective while for others the call comes to nothing because of unbelief and they are made worse by what should have made them better. This is because the Gospel call to those who believe results in eternal life and everlasting glory while to the unbelieving the Gospel call results in judgment and death.

In the same manner as the sun softens wax and hardens clay many Jews saw Christ, but they did not believe in him; they heard his word, but they did not receive it; and so both their hearing and their seeing were in vain because of the hardness of their heart and because of their unbelief they could neither see the light of God, nor feel the glorious touch of the Gospel of grace upon their lives.

Though the Jewish nation had the most convincing evidence, the most powerful preaching, the clearest call from Christ himself and from his apostles, ever since the first preaching of the Good News of the Gospel of grace multitudes of them have remained even to this day hardened and blinded to the glory of God's grace in Christ by their obstinacy and unbelief from generation to generation.

The following Jewish Lecture shows the Truth of this Statement.

In (2011) I attended a public meeting in which an Israeli lecturer who travelled the world speaking for the Jews today and about Israel's land and their history as recorded in the Bible. At the end of her lecture the meeting was opened up to the audience for questions. One lady asked: -

- How do the Jews view Jesus today?

The Jewish speakers' answerer was: -

- Our Messiah has not yet come.

There was a sudden silence over the meeting at this moment, then the same lady obviously a Christian quoted a few Scriptures to show that Israel's Messiah did come, the lecturer was kindly patient, but after a short while turned and picked up a Jewish Bible, held it in the air and said: -

- This is our Bible and there is no New Testament in it."

A man stood up and asked: -

- How do the Jewish people view a Jew who converts to Christianity?

The speakers replied: -

- We would consider that they have left the faith.

As she spoke it was clear that the Jewish people love God and love their Messiah the promised seed of Abraham and David they just haven't recognised him yet (and even this is in God's eternal plan) but it reminded me of the following fabulous and prophetic words of Zechariah: -

- The LORD will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great, the land and the priests shall mourn, and all the families that are left each by itself shall morn (Zech. 12:9-14).

When this momentous and beautiful moment takes place the entire world will change as we know it today, and a glorious New Age will begin, one of righteousness, justice, joy and peace because the King of peace will be the Head and Shepherd of all nations.

FOOTNOTE: we must always keep in mind when we are speaking of God's sovereignty, God's timeless mind, predestination and God's foreknowledge that it is with a fallen and finite mind that is limited to time (as we understand it) that we are attempting to understand God's eternal wisdom and God's eternal knowledge which is far higher than our limited fallen mortal mind can comprehend therefore we should never be dogmatic and absolute in our understandings and explanations concerning God's eternal sovereignty, but always allow for certain amount of mystery.

End.