

Pentwater Bible Church

Romans Message 31

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Isaiah the Prophet by Michelangelo from the Sistine Chapel Cir. 1512

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Romans
Message Thirty-One
Predestination and God's Sovereignty
January 22, 2023
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Romans 8:24–30

²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 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. ²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. ³⁰ 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 (KJV).

HOPE THAT IS AN EXPECTATION

Romans 8:24–25

²⁴ For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ²⁵ But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (KJV).

Hope is made up of an earnest desire, and an expectation of obtaining something. It has reference, therefore, to that which is at present unseen. The word *hope* here means the *object* of hope, the thing hoped for. The word *seeth* is used here in the sense of possessing, or enjoying. What a man already possesses, he cannot be said to hope for. What a man actually possesses, *how* can he look forward to it with anticipation? When we put our faith in Christ as Savior, we receive this hope: that we will be redeemed. Paul wrote of this assurance in other letters: “*For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*” (Galatians 5:5); and “*²⁷ to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*” (Colossians 1:27). We already have the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is unseen, but we must eagerly wait for our new bodies, that are also unseen. We keep looking in confidence for what we cannot see. Our eager anticipation is like that of the person who drives all night and eagerly looks forward to the sunrise, when the mist and darkness will be driven away. He knows it will happen and can't wait. His assurance of it carries him on. We look forward to at least 6 things promised in Scripture:

1. Our new bodies.
2. The Messianic Kingdom. Rest and the rewards of service.
3. Our eternal family and home.
4. The absence of sin and suffering.
5. Being face to face with Jesus Christ.
6. The eternal order, new heaven and new earth.

This supposes, that the persons who wait for it believe it, and their hope is that they have a love and expectation for it; that they are not already in a state of perfection and happiness. We know the status quo of this world is passing away. We are ready to part with the one, and grasp the other: the manner of our waiting is *with patience*; a grace, of which God has promised. We wait in the expectation of the heavenly glory. Waiting for things *patiently* is a quality that must be developed in us (Romans 5:3–4; James 1:3–4; 5:11; Revelation 13:10; 14:12). Patience is one of the Holy Spirit’s fruits borne in our lives. It includes fortitude, endurance, and the ability to bear up under pressure in order to attain a desired goal.

LEADING AND COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 8:26–27

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God (KJV).

As hope aids the believers in suffering (Romans 5:3–5; 8:24–25), the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses (Gr. *astheneia*). The term *astheneia* refers to the believer’s lack of spiritual insight in knowing what we should pray. Therefore, since believers lack precise direction in how to present their case before God, the Spirit Himself makes intercession (Gr. *hyperentygchanei*, means keeps interceding) for us. Though Scripture records the proper content, method (Matthew 6:9–15) and principle of praying in synchrony with God’s will (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23–24; 1 John 5:13–14), we all still struggle in the midst of suffering with how to ascertain God’s will and in what way to pray more effectively. Therefore, as creation (vv. 20–21) and believers groan (vv. 22–23), now *the Spirit* intercedes by praying *for us with* compassion (i.e., groanings; cf. Ephesians 6:18). This groaning done by the Spirit, is His intercessory prayer for us.

Therefore, even if believers cannot always determine what is God’s will especially in stressful times, God the Father He who knows the hearts of men; (I Samuel 16:7; I Kings 8:39; Hebrews 4:13) knows what is in the mind of the Spirit as He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God. Even though we or the Spirit may not utter a word of help, our needs are known by God’s omniscience as the Holy Spirit dwells in us and simultaneously within the Godhead. Furthermore, in times of suffering when things look bleak to us, we need not worry to ascertain God’s will correctly because the Spirit knows and counsels on that basis for us. Knowing this can bring peace to us who need it in times of suffering.

And he that searcheth the hearts. This is one marvelous aspect or character of only God. Only He can search into the hearts of men. One man can’t know the heart of another, nor any man fully know his own; this is the prerogative of God only. *He knoweth what is the mind of the spirit*; not the spirit of men, but of God: that affectionate desire and meaning of the Spirit of God, in the unutterable groans of the saints; He knows the wise and unspoken meaning of them. The searcher of hearts knows this, not barely by His omniscience, but He regards it, approves of it, attends, and gives an answer to it, *Because He*, the Spirit of God, *maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God*; the persons for whom he intercedes are *saints*; because of Christ are called to be saints; are sanctified by the Spirit of God, and walk after Him. Now such are the objects of God’s delight, they are chosen by Him, preserved in Christ, and have His righteousness imputed to them. To these He has made known His Gospel, has given His grace, so that intercession made for us will certainly be accepted and favored. It may be rendered, *he maketh intercession for holy things according to God*; for spiritual blessings, divine favors, things that belong to God; or divine things, which are agreeably to His nature and will: and since it is the Holy Spirit that makes intercession,

and the persons are holy for whom He makes it, and this is made for holy things, and all according to the will of God, which the Spirit of God must fully know, saints may be confident of the prevalence and success of His intercession.

GOD BRINGS ALL THINGS FOR GOOD TO HIS SAINTS

Romans 8:28

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 (KJV).

This verse develops the thought introduced at the end of verse 27. Paul emphasizes that the Spirit's efforts on our behalf are carried out in full agreement with God's will, to bring us to maturity. This is expressed elsewhere by Paul: "He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" (Ephesians 1:4).

Everything that happens to us in this life is directed toward that goal. What happens may not itself be "good," but God will make it work to our ultimate good, to meet his ultimate goal for our life. God works all things for good, not "all things work out." Suffering will still bring pain, loss, and sorrow, and sin will bring shame. But under God's control, the eventual outcome will be for our good.

God works behind the scenes, ensuring that even in the middle of mistakes and tragedies, good will result for those who love him. At times this will happen quickly, often enough to help us trust the principle. But there will also be events whose results for good we will not know until eternity. Paul knew this from his own experience: "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (Philippians 1:12); "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9–10).

God works in all things for our good. This does not mean that all that happens to us is good; evil is prevalent in our fallen world. But God is able to turn it around for our long-range good. God is not working to make us happy, but to fulfill His purpose. This promise can be claimed only by those who love God and are "called according to his purpose." Those who are called are those the Holy Spirit convinces and enables to receive Christ. Such people have a new perspective on life. We trust in God, not life's treasures; we look to our security in heaven, not on earth; and we learn to accept, not resent, pain and persecution, because God is with us.

PREDESTINATION

Romans 8:29–30

²⁹ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. ³⁰ 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 (KJV).

The apostle brings our position in Christ which was determined before the foundation of the world. He also brought it out in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1: 3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (KJV).

This verse begins one long sweeping statement in Greek and goes without a major stop from the beginning of verse three to the end of verse fourteen. Paul touches on all the great biblical themes in that complex sentence—sanctification, adoption, redemption, and glorification—and they all rest on one foundational doctrine, the doctrine of election also known as predestination. The highest spiritual blessings stand on Ephesians 1:4 where the text says that God has *chosen us* in Him before the foundation of the world. It also says that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. God didn't look down the corridor of time to see who would choose Him before He decided or even acted in some random way to select us. Rather, by His sovereign will He chose who would be in the Body of Christ. The construction of the Greek verb for "chose" indicates God chose us for Himself. That means God acted totally independent of any outside influence. He made His choice totally apart from human will and purely on the basis of His sovereignty.

The term *predestination*, which follows those words, simply means to determine one's destiny *beforehand*. This term has produced much division in the Church of Jesus Christ since He departed back to Heaven. Mostly though this heated up with the reformers in the sixteenth century. Many theologians and Bible teachers have engaged in intensive debate over this term and entire denominations have been formed and split around it. We will provide a comprehensive explanation so that we can understand what the Bible teaches on this subject and also what some denominations teach that is actually outside the biblical text. Most discussions of this topic produce too little light and too much heat. It is taught in seminaries as a part of Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) within systematic theology.

Four very important truths must be first advanced.

1. God is entirely sovereign over His creation, is in complete control of it, and He can do whatever He likes (II Kings 19:15; Job 26:13; 38:4; Psalm 103:19; Proverbs 3:19; Isaiah 42:5; 44:6; 45:12; 66:2; Jonah 1:9; Revelation 1:8; 3:14; 4:11).
2. Man, living in time and space is incapable of realizing a full understanding of God and all His ways (Job 38 & 39 etc.).
3. Because He lives outside of time and space, He can look down the long corridors of time and see all events and decisions simultaneously. He knows what will be decided in the human heart and what will happen in the future before it happens (Isaiah 44:7-8; 45:21; Psalm 139; Genesis 3:15;)
4. Prior to salvation all humans deserve to enter Hell. Without God we cannot change and save ourselves.

Jeremiah 13: 23

²³Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil (KJV)?

Jesus said to His disciples, “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you*” (John 15:16). And in the same Gospel, John wrote, “*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:12-13). And Paul said, “*But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth*” (II Thessalonians 2:13).

Those statements defining God’s sovereign choice of believers are not in the Bible to cause controversy, as if God’s election means sinners don’t make decisions. Election does not exclude human responsibility or the necessity of each person to respond to the gospel by faith. Jesus said, “*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out*” (John 6:37). Even though a simple reading of this verse appears to mean that God has chosen people to salvation before the world was formed, other verses indicate that mankind has to choose God in order to be saved (John 3:15; Acts 16:31 etc.). The dichotomy grows wider with predestination seemingly tightening to mean that God has chosen *some people* but not all to salvation (Romans 9:18; John 10: 25-29). On the other hand, some verses indicate that God wants all people to be saved (John 12:32; II Corinthians 5: 14 etc.).

We must understand that our faith and salvation rest entirely on God’s election (Acts 13:48). And yet the day we came to Jesus Christ, we did so because of an internal desire—you did nothing against your will. But even that desire is God-given—He supplies the necessary faith so we can believe (Ephesians 2:8). If your salvation depends on us, then praise to God is ridiculous. But, in truth, our praise to God is completely appropriate, because in forming the Body before the world began, He chose us by His sovereign decree apart from any of our works. The doctrine of election demonstrates God being God, exercising divine prerogatives. For that we must praise Him.

Some are shocked to find that God seemingly didn’t choose everyone to salvation. Jesus said, “*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day*” (John 6:39). God the Father chose certain individuals to form a Body as a gift to Jesus Christ. Every believer is part of that love gift to Christ—a gift of the Father’s love to His Son.

To those who say that is unjust, Paul answers: “*What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion’*” (Romans 9:14-15).

So why does God still find fault in unrepentant sinners when He didn’t choose them? Doesn’t this deny human responsibility? Is it fair for God to still hold them accountable? FAIR? What is fair? Humans all have a different vision of fairness depending on our experience base. God is in control of His creation and as such can make His own rules. Paul answers all such questions with a rebuke:

Romans 9: 20-21

But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? (NKJV)

CERTAINLY, IT DOES!

Some believe that is terribly cold and calculating. But that is only one side of God's sovereign election. Paul continues in the next chapter by saying:

Romans 10: 9-13

⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (NKJV)

These two sides of God's truth; His sovereignty in choosing us; (Romans 9) and our responsibility to confess and believe (Romans 10) is impossible for us to reconcile and understand. But Scripture declares *both aspects of salvation are true* (John 1:12-13). It's our duty to acknowledge both and accept them by faith. This, seemingly unsolvable difference in two truthful biblical concepts that can't be reconciled is called an *antinomy*. It is not a paradox or a contradiction.

The paradox or a contradiction concepts require that one or the other is untrue. This situation is when *both* are true. Another biblical antinomy is the Trinity. God is one God in three persons. Both of those imply that either one or the other is true, not both. However, both God's Divine Sovereignty and man's ability to choose are true. Hence, they provide antimony. The human's problem is that we are unsettled with an antinomy and try to take one side or the other.

Many denominations take the predestination verses in the Bible as fact and while they can't reconcile predestination with man's choice, they say man has no choice. In taking this position they must invalidate the verses that clearly show that man has choice. Others take the opposite position and say man has all the choice and God does not choose. They then relegated the verses, which clearly state that God has chosen us to obscurity, or restate them to mean something else. When we don't accept both ideas as fact and choose one or the other, we are disingenuous to the Scripture and the nature of God. Reformed churches historically take the total predestination position and Baptist churches usually take the other. The total predestination position is usually called Calvinism after John Calvin the French reformer of the sixteenth century. The entire emphasis on man's exclusive choice in the matter of salvation is usually called Arminianism after Jacob Arminius a sixteenth century Dutch theologian who advanced this concept. The problem for us is that both concepts are true and we must accept them as such.

Somewhere in the councils of God this makes sense. It never will on this earth and many have tried to no avail unless they take one side or the other. This then results in inaccurate teaching. The Doctor of souls will do all he can to keep heresies out of the church. They are to the Church of Jesus Christ what disease is to a Medical Doctor that cares for human bodies in time and space. Both legitimate Doctors will do all they can to prevent or stop heresies/diseases in their respective bodies. Unfortunately, there are more quacks in the spiritual realm than in the physical temporal one. This is because the prize for pure spiritual truth is eternal life. It is the greatest prize on earth to receive. Nothing has greater value. As evidence of this we see many false prophets, corrupt denominations and seminary teachings. As a result, few find eternal salvation. Then Satan has accomplished one of his goals; the eternal destruction of human souls.

Matthew 7: 13-15

¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. ¹⁵Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (KJV).

The deception and leading into heresy by religious authorities is not new. Jesus condemned the religious authorities of His day for leading the Jews away from eternity.

Matthew 23: 13-15

¹³But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. ¹⁴Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore, ye shall receive the greater damnation. ¹⁵Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves (KJV)

What is important for us is to clearly explain the antimony and continue to witness for Christ. We never know who will accept. We also cannot take the position that God has chosen those who will accept His call and stop telling others. We must always praise the God of the universe for who He is and stay humble for allowing us to believe. Never, never, never, never, give up.

Rabbi Moses Maimonides, a 12th century Jewish Bible teacher and philosopher provided a simile of a king in his palace and his subjects who are at different distances relative to him. Some of his subjects turn their backs to the king. Others have a strong desire to go to the palace. Several of those actually get to the palace, but only a few get in the same room with the king. There is another final effort required before they can actually stand before the king near or far, hear him, or speak to him.

He is of course referring to God as the king and the subjects are people who exert different levels of effort of drawing near to Him. He gives a superb conclusion to this simile and his concept of the workings of providence in the human as being continually as near to God as possible throughout one's life. The true worship of God is only possible when correct notions of Him have previously been conceived. When you have arrived by way of intellectual research at a knowledge of God and His works, then commence to devote yourselves to Him, try to approach Him and strengthen the intellect, which is the link that joins you to Him. Thus, Scripture says, "*Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightiest know that the Lord He is God*" (Deuteronomy 4:35); "*Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God*" (Deuteronomy 4: 36); "*Know ye that the Lord is God*" (Psalm 100:3). Thus, the Mosaic Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, "*To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul*" (Deuteronomy 11:13), and, man's love of God is identical with His knowledge of Him. The divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be preceded by the love of God."

In closing it is apparent that Maimonides sees the intellect, emanating from God as the link joining us to Him. God is providential and strongly connected to us when we exercise our power to strengthen the bond. We must seek the love of God and He will be with us, guiding us providentially until we are brought over to eternity. Therefore, our free will is directly tied to God's moral system and the strength of our desire to

be near to Him, the king in His palace provides the strongest connection through which to receive His providential emanation. When the human will is tightly connected to God in obedience then our will is in harmony with His providential care and the antimony is absent. The two seemingly incongruous wills are in synchronization.¹

Next week; Romans 8 Continued

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¹ Maimonides, Moses, Shlomo Pines translator, *Guide of the Perplexed*, The University Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois Volume II 1963 pg. 475, 620