

UNDERSTANDING THE PERFECT WILL OF GOD

TEXT: ROMANS 8:26-31

Introduction:

1. I preached two weeks ago on, “Knowing the Perfect Will of God.”
2. Then last week, I preached on, “Praying According to God’s Will.”
3. This morning my message is entitled, “Understanding the Perfect Will of God.”
4. God does have a perfect will for you and for me. Romans chapter 8 is a good passage to study if you want to understand the perfect will of God.
5. I would like to draw your attention to a phrase in Romans 8:28 – “according to His purpose.” The Bible teaches us the purpose of God.
6. According to the Bible, whatever God permits to come into our lives is designed to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (8:29).
7. Our lives are not controlled by impersonal forces such as blind chance, good luck or bad luck, fate, etc. but by the hand of God.
8. In Genesis 45:8, Joseph said to his brothers, “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Why would God allow Joseph’s brothers to sell him into slavery? Joseph said in Genesis 50:20, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”
9. This was all according to the eternal purpose of God. God was working all things out (cf. Romans 8:28).
10. Psalm 37:23 says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.” God leads us step by step.
11. Psalm 32:8 says, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.”
12. Isaiah 58:11 says, “And the LORD shall guide thee continually.” FB Meyer said, “It is impossible to think that He could guide us at all if He did not guide us always.”
13. A Christian man said to his friend, “It is difficult to trust God and realize His hand in the dark passages of life.” The friend wisely replied, “If you cannot trust a man out of your sight, he is not worth much. And, if you cannot trust God in the dark, it shows that you do not trust Him at all.”
14. God leads His children. God has a purpose for us, and the Bible plainly states what this purpose is – “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29).
15. This passage in Romans 8 has been called “the golden chain of redemption.” These five golden links are all connected, and this morning we will try and look at each one of them (Romans 8:29, 30).

I. FOREKNOWLEDGE (8:29)

1. God's will follows His foreknowledge.
2. Foreknowledge is a divine attribute of God, whereby God sees all things in the present tense. There is no past, present, or future with God. God is not bound by time.
3. "A day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day" (II Peter 3:8).
4. In Rom. 8:29, Paul says, "**For** ('because,' in other words – 'This is the reason for our assurance that all things are working together for our good') **whom He did foreknow**..." (8:29).
5. All things are working together for good because God knows all things. God is in control of all things. And if you are saved, God is helping you and wants to direct you.
6. God is omniscient – He knows all things. God knows the future as well as the past.
7. This gives us assurance that all things are working together for good to those of us who love God. When Jacob was told that Joseph was dead and Simeon was being held in Egypt, Jacob said, "All these things are against me" (Gen. 42:36).
8. Jacob was mistaken (Rom. 8:28). (All things are not working together for good for them who do not love God.)
9. God's foreknowledge guarantees that those who believe in Christ will be predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.
10. Some people get confused over the doctrine of election, but this is not something we should be confused about. Election is based upon God's foreknowledge.
11. It all starts with God's foreknowledge. Paul starts out by saying, "For whom He did foreknow..." (8:29).
12. I Peter 1:2 says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." That is clear enough.
13. Furthermore, there is no conflict between God's foreknowledge and man's free will (cf. Acts 2:23).
14. Doctrines such as the foreknowledge of God and the sovereignty of God are beyond man's comprehension. David said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139:6).
15. David was acknowledging that as a finite man with human limitations, he could not fully comprehend God's foreknowledge. This is a sacred truth that belongs in the realm of the infinite and in the realm of the supernatural.

II. PREDESTINATION (8:29)

1. God's will follows His foreknowledge, and God foreordained us to be to be conformed to the image of Christ.
2. God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son (8:29). If we study this doctrine carefully, we see that Paul is not teaching that God predestines some people for heaven and some for hell. The Bible does not teach that.
3. The Bible says God has predestinated THOSE THAT ARE SAVED "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (cf. Eph. 1:4, 5, 11).
Predestination means that some day all the redeemed shall become just like the Lord Jesus.
4. Ephesians 1:11 says, "being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."
5. By the way, these two passages (Rom. 8 and Eph. 1) are the only two passages in the Bible in which the word "predestination" is found. But to hear some preachers, you would think "predestination" was taught in every chapter in the Bible.
6. Predestination and election do not refer to certain people being saved or lost, but they relate to those who are already saved in respect to certain privileges and blessings.
7. Predestination looks forward to what God will work in those who have become His own. This work begins at regeneration.
8. Some people use the words "predestinated" and "saved" interchangeably. This is wrong and has caused much confusion. You may use the words "saved" and "received Christ" and "born again" interchangeably. And in some instances you can use the words "saved" and "converted" interchangeably, but it is incorrect to use the word "predestinated" in this manner.
9. Predestination simply means that those who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour shall be conformed to be like Him (8:29).

III. CALLED (8:30)

1. Everyone who was predestinated in eternity is also called in time.
Beloved: God's foreknowledge and predestination go back to eternity past, but God's call is now.
2. Paul is speaking here of an "effectual call." There is a general call, and there is an effectual call. "Many are called (general call), but few are chosen (effectual call)" (Matthew 22:14).
3. Those that are chosen (effectually called) are those who respond to God's call.

4. Spurgeon preached a message on the conversion of Zaccheus, entitled “Effectual Calling.” Spurgeon said Zaccheus’ call was:
 - I. A very *gracious* call because Zaccheus “was of an exceedingly bad trade, and probably cheated the people in order to enrich himself.”
 - II. It was a *personal* call. “There were boys in the tree as well as Zaccheus but there was no mistake about the person who was called. It was, ‘Zaccheus, make haste and come down.’”
 - III. Thirdly, it is a *hastening* call. “Zaccheus, make haste.”
 - IV. Next, it is a *humbling* call. “Zaccheus, make haste and *come down*.” “Now, proud sinners, it is of no use for you to be proud, to stick yourselves up in the trees; Christ will have you down.”
 - V. Next, it is an *affectionate* call. “Today I must abide in *thy house*.”
 - VI. Furthermore, it was an *abiding* call. “Today I must abide at thy house.”
 - VII. It was a *necessary* call. “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” This reminds us of John 4, where our Lord saved the woman at the well and many others in her village in Samaria. John 4:4 says, “And He must needs go through Samaria.”
 - VIII. Spurgeon concluded by saying, “Lastly, this call was an *effectual* one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus’ door; spread was his table; generous was his heart; washed were his hands; unburdened was his conscience; joyful was his soul. ‘Here, Lord,’ says he, ‘the half of my goods I give to the poor; I dare say I have robbed them of half my property—and now I restore it.’ ‘And if I have taken anything from any one by false accusation, I will restore it to him fourfold.’”
5. Zaccheus’ call was effectual and his conversion was genuine. But not every sinner who hears the Gospel call responds the way Zaccheus did.
6. Through the reading and the preaching of God’s Word, the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner of his need for salvation. He may receive the call or reject the call.
7. Proverbs 1:24 says, “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.”
8. Isaiah 66:4 says, “When I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.”

IV. JUSTIFICATION (8:30)

1. All who respond to God's call are justified, i.e., they are declared righteous by God. This means we are clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ, and fit for the presence of God (cf. Romans 3:24, 28, 30; 4:1-6; 5:1, 9).
2. The RCC and many other groups teach justification by faith plus works (or sacraments), but the Bible teaches justification by faith alone. Works will automatically follow those who are justified. Good works are evidence of justification.

V. GLORIFICATION (8:30; cf. 8:17)

1. Actually we are not yet glorified, but it is so certain that God describes it in the past tense as if it has already happened (8:30).
2. God sees our glorification as though it were present and complete. Now, it is not complete in our experience, because we have not yet been glorified. But God sees the believer's glorification as though it were in the present before Him.
3. This passage supports the doctrine of eternal security. Saving sinners is part of God's eternal purpose. Every true believer is foreknown and predestinated by God, and every true believer will answer God's call, will be justified on the basis of his faith, and will be glorified for all eternity.
4. Paul adds, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (8:31; cf. 8:38, 39).
5. You can be sure that if you have trusted Christ, you will make it all the way. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).
6. On the other hand, those that do not make it all the way have not been genuinely saved.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Bible teaches that as we pray and read God's Word, the Holy Spirit will guide us through providential circumstances. FB Meyer wrote, "God's impressions within and His word without are always corroborated by His Providence around, and we should quietly wait until these three focus into one point."
2. In his commentary on Paul's epistle to the Romans, WH Griffith Thomas tells an interesting story about the renowned French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894). Many years ago, Mr. de Lesseps was detained on a ship in the Mediterranean Sea on account of quarantine. Being a very active and busy man, Mr. de Lesseps found it very difficult to have to wait around.

3. While sitting on the deck of the ship he read a book, and while reading this book he conceived the idea of building the Suez Canal, which joined the Mediterranean and Red Seas for the first time in 1869. This canal substantially reduced the sailing distances and times between the West and the East.
4. Dr. Thomas concludes this story by saying, “Did Mr. de Lesseps afterwards regret those dragging days of quarantine? And if the child of God could realize more fully the constant presence and guidance of a loving Father he would more readily perceive that all things are really working together for his good” (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*).

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