

G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

HOW GREAT A SALVATION, Part 2

Understanding the *Ordo Salutis* [Order of Salvation] of God

Romans 8:28-30

June 22, 2008

- I. **Biblical Evidence of Election and Predestination**
- II. **A Biblical Understanding of Election and Predestination**
- III. **Common Objections to Predestination and Elections**
- IV. **Implications of the Biblical Doctrines of Predestination and Election**

- Over the next several weeks, we will be taking a biblical look at the doctrine of Salvation, technically referred to as *Soteriology*.
- Specifically, we are going to examine **Romans 8:28-30**, as well as other pertinent Scriptural passages, examining our salvation in terms of the *Ordo Salutis*, that is the “Order of Salvation.”
- Examining the Scriptures, the “Order of Salvation” we see is as follows:
 - 1.) The Covenant of Redemption [Decrees of God]
 - 2.) Election
 - 3.) The Outward Gospel Call
 - 4.) Regeneration
 - 5.) Faith / Repentance
 - 6.) Justification
 - 7.) Adoption
 - 8.) Sanctification
 - 9.) Perseverance
 - 10.) Death
 - 11.) Glorification
- From last week we saw that when we consider God’s Plan of Salvation, we speak in terms of the **Covenant of Redemption**. Typically, when theologians refer to this Covenant, they speak in terms of an agreement between the Father and the Son, prior to creation, in eternity past. However, it certainly involves all three Persons of the

Godhead. It is a truth that most certainly magnifies the whole of the Godhead, the Trinity.

“Theologians speak of...a covenant...among the members of the Trinity. This covenant they call the ‘covenant of redemption.’ It is an agreement among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the Son agreed to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of [the Law] on our behalf, and pay the penalty of sin, which we deserved.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

* * * * *

- ❑ However, this week, we move beyond the Covenant of Redemption to Election, Predestination, and Foreknowledge.
- ❑ Just seven years ago, I could not have preached this sermon this morning. I had yet to fully come to grips with what I now see that Scriptures reveal concerning the doctrine of Election.
- ❑ Furthermore, there is likely no doctrine in all of Christian theology that is more controversial and more contested than the doctrine of Election.
- ❑ This should not surprise us; however, as it takes the individual out of the center of the picture and affirms that it is God who is ultimately in control with respect to His creation.
- ❑ Moreover, as Americans, the concept of an absolute Sovereign monarch is nearly impossible for us to embrace...For we recognize NO chief ruler over us...We are Americans. In fact, our individual freedom in this country has become sort of an idol in the church. For when we come to the Kingdom of God, we enter, not into a democracy, but a monarchy. Yet, our ruler is loving and benevolent King.

I. **Biblical Evidence of Election and Predestination**

- ❑ Dr. Robert Culver, former Professor at Wheaton College as well as Trinity Divinity School, writes that the biblical evidence for election “**is not a trickle but an avalanche.**”

OLD TESTAMENT

- ❑ Going all the way back to the Book of Genesis, it is clear that God is a God who chooses. We see this powerfully in the call of Abraham in Genesis 12.
 - I love to ask the question, “Why did God call Abraham?” The answer is NOT, “Because Abram had faith.” Abram was a pagan living in modern-day Iraq at the time that God called him.
 - The only biblical answer is, “God call Abram simply because He did.” We do not know why.
- ❑ Then, we turn to God’s choosing of the nation of Israel.

- The same truth applies to the nation of Israel that applied to Abram the individual.
- God calls people and individual simply because He does...for His Glory.

NEW TESTAMENT

□ From the teaching of Jesus Christ:

John 6:37-39, 44-45

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me... 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. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 10:3-4

“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

John 10:24-26

“The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.’”

John 15:16 [Jesus speaking to His disciples]:

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

John 17:2 [Jesus praying His “High Priestly Prayer” to the Father]

“...you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.”

Acts 18:9-10 [The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to Paul through a vision while he is in Corinth]

“And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’”

□ From the teaching of the Apostles:

Acts 13:48

“When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

Romans 9:11-13

“And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, ‘THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.’ Just as it is written, ‘JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.’”

Romans 11:7

“What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it...”

Ephesians 1:4-6

“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

Ephesians 1:11-12

“also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5

“knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

2 Timothy 1:9

“who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,”

1 Peter 1:1-2

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”

Revelation 13:7-8

“It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”

Revelation 17:8

“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.”

II. A Biblical Understanding of Election and Predestination

Romans 8:28-30

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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

- This passage is one of the central places in Scripture which speaks of the doctrine of predestination. **Yet, it is also one of the most commonly misinterpreted.**
- To begin with, the context of this passage is even clearer if one first goes up to **Verses 26-27.**

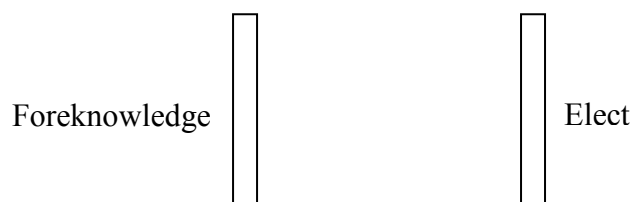
“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

- Consequently, it is evident that the Apostle Paul is speaking here, particularly, of the work of the Person of the Holy Spirit.
- This context helps us, then, to understand **Verse 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.”
- In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Martin Luther, writing in the 16th Century, states, “This passage [Verses 28-30] is the foundation on which rests everything that the Apostle says to the end of the chapter; for he means to show that to the elect who are loved of God and who love God, the Holy Spirit makes all things work for good...”
 - Thus, Verses 29-30, then, explain the truth that **in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**
 - That is, Paul’s purpose [under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit] is to use **Verses 29-30 as a source of encouragement to believers.**
- Then, in Verse 29, Paul begins with the doctrine of predestination.
 - Martin Luther continues, “He [Paul] here takes up the doctrine of predestination or election. This doctrine is not so incomprehensible as many think, but it is rather full of sweet comfort for the elect and for all who have the Holy Spirit. But it is most bitter and hard *for those who adhere* to the wisdom of the flesh.”

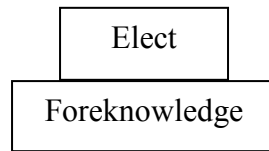
The Relationship between Foreknowledge and Predestination / Election?

- It seems that the most common explanation of Election / Predestination in the Christian world is this: “God knows who will accept or reject Him [on the basis of their own free will], and He predestines these.”
 - Other explanations are similar: “God looks down through the ‘tunnel of time’ and sees those who will accept or reject Him [on the basis of their own free will] and He predestines these.”
 - “Jesus has made one vote for you; Satan another, and it is up to you to make the final, deciding vote. God already knows what decision you will make and basis his “predestination” on this knowledge – or ‘foreknowledge.’
 - Each of these sayings may “sound good” or “preach well”; but, they are simply **unbiblical**.
- On the contrary to these sayings, Lutheran scholar and theologian, John Theodore Mueller writes: “God’s eternal election of grace did not take place in view of man’s foreseen final faith, but rather embraced this faith together with the whole way of salvation [all elements in the *ordo salutis*], such as conversion, justification, sanctification, and final preservation. Hence the believer is not elected because of his foreseen faith; on the contrary, he has become a believer in time because of his eternal election to salvation. In other words, a person is brought to saving faith in time just because God from eternity has graciously elected him to salvation.”
- Nineteenth Century Presbyterian scholar, A.A. Hodge, who served as professor at Princeton from 1877-1886, wrote, “It is self-evident that the same actions cannot be both the grounds upon which election rests and the fruits in which election is said to result. Since the Bible teaches that ‘faith’, ‘repentance’, and ‘evangelical obedience’ are the latter [i.e. fruits]; they cannot be the former [i.e. grounds]. The Scriptures do so teach in Ephesians 1:4.”
- Also, Robert Duncan Culver, modern-day theologian [and author of one of the most comprehensive and voluminous texts on Systematic Theology ever written in the English language], writes:

“...it is not on the basis of prescience (knowledge ahead of time) but in harmony, in consonance with it. When we read in 1 Peter 1:1, 2 that believers are ‘elect...*according* to the foreknowledge of God the Father [emphasis added]’ the Greek *kata* [κατα], rendered ‘according to’, presents a picture of parallel, harmony. It would be diagrammed like this:



Not like this with election *based on* (which is *not* what the Greek word means) foreknowledge.



A Biblical Understanding of “Knowing”

- When seeking to determine the biblical definition of **foreknowledge**, one must first begin with an understanding of the *biblical* concept of “**knowing**.”

1. The first truth that one must embrace in order to understand the proper definition of foreknowledge here in Romans 8:29 is that **God is the subject**.

- Consequently, one should, then, search the Scriptures for the usage of “know” where God is the subject.
- Some examples include:
 - “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, / And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” **Jeremiah 1:5**
 - “The LORD said to Moses, ‘I will also do this thing which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.’” **Exodus 33:17**

2. From these passages, what is clear is that God’s “knowing” is always **personal**. This should not surprise us, because God, by nature of the eternal Trinity, is, in His essence Personal.

- In fact, in Genesis 4:1, Moses speaks of the physical intimacy between Adam and Eve, writing, “Now the man *knew* His wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain...”
 - It is this **personal** concept of knowing that is consistent with the biblical testimony.
- Theologian, author, and Professor at Knox Theological Seminary, Robert Reymond, writes:

“...the Hebrew verb *yada*, meaning “to know” [Genesis 4:1, 18:19; Exodus 2:25; Psalms 1:5, 144:43; Jeremiah 1:5; Hosea 13:5; Amos 3:2] and the Greek verb γινωσκω, *ginosko*, “to know,” can mean something on the order of “to know

intimately,” “to set one’s affections upon” or “to have special loving regard for,” and the verb προεγνώ, *proegno*, in Romans 8:29 intends something approximating this meaning rather than the sense of mere prescience.”

- Also, Dr. Douglas Moo, of Wheaton College, states, “In the six occurrences [of the Greek word for *foreknow*, γινώσκω, *ginosko*] in the New Testament, only two mean ‘know beforehand’ (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17); the three others besides the occurrence in this text [Romans 8:29], all of which have God as their subject, mean not ‘no before’ – in the sense of intellectual knowledge, or cognition – but ‘enter into relationship with before’ or ‘choose, or determine before’ [Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2].”
- Furthermore, Dr. Moo continues, “That the verb here contains this peculiarly biblical sense of ‘know’ is suggested by the fact that it has a simple personal object. Paul does not say that God knew anything about us but that He knew *us*, and this is reminiscent of the Old Testament sense of know” as well.
 - This is precisely the Apostle Paul’s point in Galatians 4:9:

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?” Galatians 4:9

- Paul is not stating that you have come to know *about* God; but, rather, that you have come to know God [intimately and personally], “or rather to be known by God [intimately and personally]...”

3. Therefore, it makes sense that in each passage where God is the object and “knowing” or “foreknowledge” is used, Persons , NOT mere facts, are the object!

- In his book, *The Potter’s Freedom*, Dr. James White correctly states, “Therefore, to say that God foreknows *acts, faith, behavior, choices, etc.* is to assume something about the term [‘knowledge’ or ‘foreknowledge’] *that is not witnessed in the biblical text.* God foreknows *persons* not *things.*”

4. In Romans 8:29, the verb “foreknew” is in the Active Voice.

- In other words, it is NOT passive. That is, it is not [as many, if not most Christians assert] that God “looks down through the ‘tunnel’ of time and ‘sees’ or ‘knows’ who will accept or reject them based upon their own free will, and *then* ‘predestines’ them to salvation.”
 - Such an act would come very close to putting man in the “driver seat” of his own salvation.
 - It would, indeed, be the beginnings of salvation, at least in part, by works or merit.

- It would threaten the very nature of the Gospel itself, that we are **saved by Grace ALONE**.
 - Biblical salvation, on the contrary, is completely an act of God’s grace.
 - Not only this, it would place God in a limited position; limited by the “tunnel” of time and space.
- Therefore, the verb “foreknew” is in the ACTIVE voice. Thus, it is as though God **actively pursued us, knowing us intimately and personally prior to the creation of the world.**
 - This should not surprise us, for God is not bounded by the limitations of time and space.
 - James White continues, “...the *use* of the verbal concept of ‘foreknowing’ in the New Testament, together with these testimonies from the Old Testament, are more than sufficient basis for asserting that when Paul says ‘and those whom He foreknew’ Paul is speaking about an *action* on God’s part that is just as solitary, just as God-centered, and just as *personal* as every other action in the string: God foreknows (chooses to enter into relationship with); God predestines; God calls; God justifies; God glorifies. From first to last it is God who is active, God who accomplishes *all* these things.”
 - Once again, this is consistent with the eternal nature of Almighty God, whose very name, YHWH, is a verb.

The Basis of our Election is NOT God’s ‘Foreknowledge’ of our Faith, but the Counsel of God’s Will

- Once again, the election of God’s people is rooted in the “counsel of His will”, that is the counsel of the three Persons of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – from eternity past.
- This is undeniably clear in Paul’s opening to his Epistle to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 1:3-12 states, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as ***He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world***, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, ***according to the kind intention of His will***, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the

summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, *having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.” [emphasis added]

- ❑ Since God’s ways are higher than ours [Isaiah 55:8-9], it should not surprise us that God’s decisions may not make sense to us.
- ❑ In his monumental 16th century work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin [who is often *wrongly* accused of being overly-obsessed with the doctrine of predestination], warned against those who are over-curious with respect to the will of God, which is secret to finite humans:

“First, then, let them remember that when they inquire into predestination they are penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit. For it is not right for man unrestrainedly to search out things that the Lord has willed to be hid in Himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublime wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this he also should fill us with wonder. He has set forth in his Word the secrets of his will that he has decided to reveal to us. These he decided to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us.”

III. Common Objections to Election and Predestination

1. It is arbitrary

- ❑ As we saw last week, this is simply untrue and impossible.
 - It is impossible for God to act in an arbitrary manner, for such is contrary to His nature.
 - Yet, there is a reason why God planned salvation in the manner He did. There is a reason why God graciously chose some to salvation – we simply do not know why.
- ❑ Again, the Scriptures state that God’s decisions in salvation are **based on the counsel of His will**. Thus, the reason why God has acted in the manner He has is hidden to us, for it is based on the counsel of the Persons of the Trinity in eternity past.

2. It is not fair.

- ❑ This is untrue as well.
- ❑ It appears, however, that the vast majority of Christians, even though they will likely not admit it, in their hearts of hearts believe that they do not deserve hell.

- ❑ Yet, the biblical reality is that “all of sinned” and “the wages of sin is death.” All of us deserve hell.
- ❑ Consequently, if God were fair, then we would all get what we deserve.
- ❑ We will look at this concern in great depth over the next two weeks.

In the coming weeks, we will address these final objections [as well as the idea of “fair”] in much more depth:

3. It destroys, or at least threatens greatly, human responsibility; thus, reducing humans to “robots” or “puppets.”

- ❑ Dr. Douglas Moo, writes, “Paul highlights the divine initiative in the outworking of God’s purpose. This does not entail any minimizing of the importance of the human response of faith that has received so much attention in Chapters 1-4 [of Romans].”

4. God desires for everyone to be saved.

- ❑ This concern often arises from passages such as John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Titus 2:11; and 2 Peter 3:9.

5. It is fatalistic – “whatever will be will be.”

IV. Implications to the Biblical Doctrine of Election and Predestination

1. Our belief in God’s sovereignty in salvation fuels our passion for prayer and evangelism [or at least it should]

- ❑ When we pray, we take great confidence in praying to the ONLY SOVEREIGN of the Universe!
- ❑ As we will see in the coming weeks, we do not pray in order to change God’s mind; we pray in order to align our wills with His!
- ❑ Also, when we proclaim the Gospel, we do so fearlessly, knowing that someone’s eternal “destiny” is not in our hands. However, God ordains the ends as well as the means; and He has ordained the proclamation of the Gospel as the means of salvation. Therefore, we are to be simply obedient to His command to boldly proclaim the Gospel message.

- ❑ It should be of no surprise that historically, many, if not most, of the great revivals, going all the way back to the Reformation, were begun by individuals who fully embraced God’s sovereign election.

2. It comforts us, giving us security.

- ❑ The 16th Century Lutheran *Formula of Concord* rightly states, “The predestination, or eternal election of God, extends only over the godly, beloved children of God, *being a cause of their salvation*, which He provides as well as disposes what belong thereto. Upon this [election] our salvation is founded so firmly that the gates of hell cannot overcome it, John 10:28; Matthew 16:18.
- ❑ Since our salvation is rooted in God’s objective will, we do not have to fear whether or not we can “lose” our salvation...for such is impossible.
- ❑ This is the context of **Romans 8:28-30**, and it is the basis of Paul’s words in Philippians 1:6: **“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

3. It humbles us

- ❑ It makes us truly realize that “It is not all about me!”
- ❑ As one saying, printed on the masthead of *Free Grace Broadcaster* in Pensacola, Florida goes: “[Election is a truth] **to humble the pride of man, to exalt the Grace of God in salvation, and to promote real holiness in heart and life.**”

4. It exalts God and His grace

- ❑ The biblical doctrine of election preserves the truth that salvation is a work of God’s grace from the beginning all the way to the end.
- ❑ It was not until I fully embraced election that I could truly stand back in awe of God’s amazing grace which saved me!
- ❑ Then, and only, then did I truly realize that there is no greater miracle in the world than the miracle of salvation – the resurrection of a spiritually dead sinner to life eternal!

- ❑ In conclusion, Robert Duncan Culver writes, “Somehow the false impression is abroad that election is a denominational specialty peculiar to Presbyterians and Reformed theologians. Historically, the most numerous defenders of the doctrine in America have been Baptists, now in a state of recovery! The latter are only very recently reawakening to this their heritage.”
- ❑ Read **Revelation 19:1-6**

