

The Greatest Comfort (8:28)

8:28 *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

“All Things” Include the Bad Stuff

- Remember Joseph’s words to his brothers: “...*you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive*” (Genesis 50:20; see also 45:5-8).
- Perhaps the most profound example of this is the greatest evil in human history: the killing of Jesus Christ. **READ Acts 2:22,23; 3:13-15,18; 4:27,28.** Who were the human instruments of Christ’s death? Who used the sinful, freely-chosen actions of those human instruments to accomplish His eternal plan?
- The death of Christ at the hands of sinful men was the purpose of God from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-7; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 1:20), and it was willingly agreed to by the Son before the foundation of the world (John 6:51; 12:27; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 2:14; 10:5-7).¹ If this greatest sin in human history was

¹ We see this agreement in Isaiah 53:10,11. Our Baptist forefathers described the eternal covenant between Father and Son for our salvation in this way: “...[the covenant of grace] is founded in that eternal covenant transaction that was between the Father and the Son about the redemption of the elect...it pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between Them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto Whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified” (1689 Baptist Confession, 7:3; 8.1). Creation, all of history, and eternity future all come out of the Father and Son’s agreement to

- used for God’s glory and good, then all lesser sins, no matter how great, are part of His plan, too.²
- “God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy...as the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a more

save a people unto Themselves for Their eternal glory (and our eternal joy).

² “The death of Jesus Christ was murder. It was the most spectacular sin ever committed. At the all-important pivot of human history, the worst sin ever committed served to show the greatest glory of Christ and obtain the sin-conquering gift of God’s grace. God did not just overcome evil at the cross. He made evil serve the overcoming of evil. He made evil commit suicide in doing its worst evil. Evil is anything and everything opposed to the fullest display of the glory of Christ. That’s the meaning of evil. In the death of Christ, the powers of darkness did their best to destroy the glory of the Son of God. This is the apex of evil. But instead they found themselves quoting the script of ancient prophecy and acting the part assigned by God. Precisely in putting Christ to death, they put His glory on display – the very glory that they aimed to destroy. The apex of evil achieved the apex of the glory of Christ. The glory of grace...sin and evil, no matter how spectacular, could never nullify the decisive, Christ-exalting purposes of God...these spectacular sins do not just *fail* to nullify God’s purpose to glorify Christ, they *succeed*, by God’s unfathomable providence, in making His gracious purpose come to pass. **This truth is the steel God offers to put in the spine of His people as they face the worst calamities.**” John Piper, *Spectacular Sins* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), pgs. 12,17 (embolding mine).

special manner **it taketh care of His church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof**
(1689 Baptist Confession 5.1,7).

Fuel for Our Thanksgiving

- “...*God causes **all things** to work together for good...*” If God uses **everything** as an ultimate means to our eternal and infinite good, how can we not give thanks to Him in all these things? Thanksgiving is, in fact, the *only* appropriate response to the incredible truth of Romans 8:28!
 - “...*be filled with the Spirit...always giving thanks for **all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father*” (Ephesians 5:18b,20).
 - “*Be anxious for nothing, but in **everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*” (Philippians 4:6,7).
 - “*Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in **everything** give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus*” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Two Phrases Describing the Saints

Those Who Love God

- Paul doesn’t often speak of our love for God (1 Corinthians 2:9; 8:3; Ephesians 6:24), since our love is secondary, or derivative, of God’s eternal love for us first (Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:4,5; 2:4,5; Titus 3:3,4; 1 John 4:10,19).
- “...*those who love God*” are those who have first experienced “*the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:39). The roots of our love for God are found in the following phrase – we who love God have been “*called according to His purpose.*”

Those Who Are Called According to His Purpose

- It’s important to remember that God does all that He does for **His own will, plan, and purpose** – not ours. Paul will speak of our predestination in the following verse (8:29), and we need to remember that believers have “*been predestined according to His purpose Who works all things after the counsel of His will*” (Ephesians 1:11).³
- God’s calling is not an invitation, but is powerful – when God speaks, things happen. God spoke creation into being in Genesis 1. When God calls through “*those who bring good news of good things*” (Romans 10:15), a new creation happens in the life of His elect.⁴
 - When we present the Gospel to a lost person, theologians refer to this as a “general call.”⁵

³ Romans 9:11; 2 Timothy 1:9 also underline the fact that God’s election and calling are not reliant on our free will or merit in the slightest. Brace yourselves – Romans 9 is the most challenging chapter in the Bible because of its assault on our sense of autonomy and power of our free will/choice.

⁴ Paul compares Genesis 1 creation with rebirth through the preaching of the Gospel in 2 Corinthians 4:6. I would argue that, since the new birth re-creation in Christ is eternal and the existing creation is temporary (2 Corinthians 5:17), Genesis 1 was inspired to ultimately teach us a spiritual truth principle about our re-creation in Christ.

⁵ Jesus gives us this category of “general call” in the parable of Matthew 22:1-14. The King (the Father), giving a wedding feast for His Son (Jesus), sends out servants to extend the invitation. Their invitation is a “general call,” like our proclamation of the Gospel. Jesus ends the parable by saying, “*many are called, but few are chosen.*” The word “*chosen*” here is the same as the word “*elect*” (ἐκλεκτός). For those elected/predestined by God, the **general call** of God’s servants will be received as an **effectual call** of God, having

- When God the Holy Spirit uses our presentation of the Gospel to bring His elect to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, theologians refer to this as an “effectual call.”⁶
- In 8:30, Paul will say, “*those whom He called, He also justified.*” He doesn’t say that God only justifies some of the called. All of those God calls through our presentation of the Gospel will be justified by faith in Jesus Christ.
- There is a comfort in this; the salvation of souls is not reliant on how persuasive we are with the Gospel. We are simply called to share the Gospel. Its effectiveness is entirely up to God. Share

His Spirit’s power in it to make it effective for a response of obedience-producing faith.

⁶ Our Baptist forefathers used this terminology, too: “Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace. This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it” (1689 Baptist Confession, 10.1,2).

the Gospel, and trust Him with the results.⁷

God’s Purpose for His People (8:29)

^{8:29} *For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...*

Those Whom He Foreknew

- This is not God looking into the future to see who would choose Him. He foreknows people, not decisions by those people.⁸ “The background of the term should be located in the OT, where for God ‘to know’ (עָדָה, *yāda*) refers to His covenantal love in which He sets His affection on those whom he has chosen (cf. Gen. 18:19; Exod. 33:17; 1 Sam. 2:12; Ps. 18:43; Prov. 9:10; Jer. 1:5; Hos. 13:5; Amos 3:2).”⁹
- The verb “*foreknew*” describes God’s love and affection for those whom He would draw into the eternal covenant relationship through His Son. The verb “*predestined*” stresses God’s unchangeable plan

⁷ This is why Paul, who proclaimed the Gospel, prayed for the salvation of the lost (Romans 10:1). He knew the effects of Gospel proclamation are entirely God’s.

⁸ Before we are saved what does the Bible say about us? READ Romans 5:6,8,10; Ephesians 2:1,3,5.

⁹ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), pg. 453. Another good illustration of this is Jeremiah 1:5. God says to the prophet, “*before I formed you in the womb I knew you,*” which is paralleled by the verbs “*I consecrated you*” and “*I have appointed you.*” God did not look into the future, see that Jeremiah would be a prophet, and make plans accordingly. God’s foreknowledge of Jeremiah resulted in Jeremiah’s calling as a prophet. Another illustration: “...*Adam knew [עָדָה] Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain*” (Genesis 4:1, E.S.V.). A baby didn’t result from Adam knowing facts about his wife; it was the result of relationship.

and purpose for those whom He would draw into that relationship.

The Golden Chain (8:30)

8:30...and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- This passage has been called “the golden chain” in Church history because it traces our salvation from eternity past in the plan of God to eternity future in our sharing in His glory.
- The “good” God started in your life by saving you from His righteous wrath against your sin will be completed when your conformity to Christ the Son is completed in glory.
 - “...predestined” refers to God’s purpose in eternity past to save a people unto Himself through His Son. See also Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:4-6,11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1,2; 1 Peter 1:2.
 - “...called” describes that purpose being affected in history by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the preaching of the Gospel by the Church.
 - “...justified” is what happens when God the Holy Spirit works through our proclamation of the Gospel, causing dead souls to come to life by faith in Jesus Christ, and being declared “not guilty” now and forever before God.¹⁰

¹⁰ “In Romans 4:17, God’s work in justification is compared to His work in creating the world out of nothing. Justification is the fiat declaration, ‘Let there be righteousness!’ even where, at present, there is nothing but guilt and unrighteousness in the sinner, because Christ’s righteousness is imputed through Spirit-given and gospel-created faith.” Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), pg. 621.

- “...glorified” should bring to mind what Paul said earlier in this same chapter: “...I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (8:18; see also Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Colossians 1:27).

How Can I Know I Am Called, Foreknown, Predestined, Justified, and Glorified by God?

- Paul’s words ought to lead us to ask this question!
- You can know God has called, foreknown, predestined, justified, and glorified you if, upon hearing what He has done to save you through Jesus Christ, you “confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead” (10:9).¹¹ The promise attached to this is that “you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says [in Isaiah 28:16], ‘whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed’” (10:9-11). Saving “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ” (10:17).
- We proclaim the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. God uses that proclamation to save those who believe it. If you have heard and believe, you can know that God has called, foreknown, predestined, justified, and glorified you.

¹¹ God, by His power to give us a new, believing, and obedient heart, causes His elect to respond to the Gospel by faith in Jesus Christ: “...no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). This is what Jesus’ words in John 3:3,5-8 mean. To “be born of the Spirit” is to be moved by the Spirit as the wind (which is invisible) can be heard and moves things – He moves us to saving belief in God’s given Son (3:15,16,18).