

“Whom He Foreknew, These He Also Glorified”
(Romans 8:29-30)

Introduction: This morning we were looking at that blessing of Christ which is the fountain of all the others, the blessing of the new birth. The new birth is something we must undergo before we even have a spiritual perception of God’s kingdom, not to mention, before we enter into it. To have this is to have everything, but to lack it is to lack everything. As we also saw, this blessing is sovereignly bestowed from above by the Spirit, as He breathes into His people the breath of life. Not everyone receives it, even among those who seek for it. And sometimes people don’t seek for it, and yet receive it anyway. The appropriate question to ask here is, How does God choose whom He will bestow this gift upon? This evening, I want us to look at the fountain of this blessing of the new birth, as well as its culmination.

In our text, Paul is arguing that the blessings which the Spirit bestows in regeneration, or the new birth, overcome the dreadful effects of the sin which indwells us. After having described the condition of the Christian who struggles with these two opposing forces within him, Paul writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (vv. 1-2). God has introduced into your soul a new principle, a new law, which desires the things of God. It, by the Spirit’s power, is able to overcome our sin, that we might walk in holiness of life. The Spirit also helps us in our warfare by assuring us of our interest in Christ by bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and that one day we will be set free from the corruption of our flesh (vv. 15-25). And lastly, He helps us in our prayers by praying for us according to the will of God. With all these things in mind, Paul can say, “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” (v. 28). In other words, Paul is saying that God works all things together for good for those who have received the new birth, for it is the new birth which brings the work of the Spirit, it is the new birth which gives to us a love for God, it is the new birth which is this calling which he refers to here. And why is it that everything will work together for good? It is because God has a plan to finally glorify all those whom He has foreknown and called in this way. This idea directs the rest of the passage to its very glorious and comforting conclusion that nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What I want you to see from this text this evening is the fountain of that new birth and its culmination, namely,

The new birth has its fountain in the foreknowledge of God and reaches its climax in the final glorification of the believer.

- I. **The first statement gives to us the fountain of this calling, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”**
 - A. Foreknowledge, it appears, is at the foundation of God’s calling us by His Spirit. But we need to understand what is first meant here by foreknowledge.
 1. Does this mean that God looks down the corridors of time to see if someone will chose

Him, and therefore He chooses them, as the Arminians teach?

2. This is what they say Peter also had in mind where he wrote, "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" (1 Peter 1:1-2).
 3. Is this how God determines whom He will chose and whom not?
 4. If that is the case, then how do we explain what Paul writes in Romans 9:16, regarding the election of God, "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." If it does not depend on the will of man, or on the works of man, then how can God be said to choose according to what man chooses?
 5. And if it is man who ultimately chooses whether or not he will be in heaven, then how can God be said to have any kind of meaningful choice?
 6. And if God must look into the future to see what will take place and what not, then how can He be said to be sovereign? If things will be in the future as they will be apart from the plan of God, then God is not in control. For if God certainly foreknows that something is going to take place, then it will take place, and nothing, not even God can change it, for it was possible that He would change it, then He could not know it as certainly taking place in the future.
 7. But notice that our text says nothing about God's foreknowing what they will do. The passage in 1 Peter also says nothing about what they will do. Rather, our text says "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to become conformed to the image of His Son." It is not what they do, but they themselves that He foreknows.
 8. Now I have told you before that the Bible uses the term "know" in more way than simple knowledge of facts. It may also refer to the most intimate of relationships between a man and woman. For instance, Moses writes, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD" (Gen. 4:1).
 9. Since that which God foreknows is the person, and not what that person does, it is better to understand this as God's foreloving those individuals. This is to say that God from all eternity has loved certain individuals.
- B. And what was the result of this foreknowing, or foreloving of God? "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son."
1. God, out of His love and mercy, predestined that these objects of His love would become like His Son.
 - a. To predestinate someone means to decide one's destiny, or destination, beforehand.
 - b. What God decided He would do, for His glory, was to predestine these whom He loved to be made like His Son, who is His perfect image. It is His own image that God delights in the most, for what could God delight in more than His own perfect image? This is the reason why Christ is so loved by the Father as well, because He shares in that same perfect and divine image.
 - c. And so God determined from all eternity that He would take these whom He loved and make them like His Son. The rest, the Bible tells us, He passed over and left to the consequences of their own sin. This is known as reprobation, and it is a very terrible doctrine, for it tells us that countless multitudes will be tormented forever in hell, paying the just consequences of their sins against the infinitely holy God.

2. And what was the reason God did this? There are really two.
 - a. Our text tells us one, namely, “that He might be the first-born among many brethren.”
 - b. To be first-born, in Scripture, means to have the preeminence. It is that Christ might be at the head of His chosen race. We are the reward which Christ receives for His work of mediation. And He will keep us and rule over us for the rest of eternity with His rule of loving benevolence and grace. And I am sure that you, as well as I, are thankful for the fact that you are Christ’s reward, for then you can be with Him where He is, and wherever He goes.
 - c. But the second reason that God chose some to be conformed to the image of His Son and to pass over others, was that He might glorify Himself.
 - d. If God had not decreed the Fall, and its subsequent consequences for this world, then we would not have a complete picture of God. If we had not experienced the depths of sin and the subsequent mercy and grace of God, we would know very little about it. If no one was to receive the punishment of God for their sins, we would then know nothing of His just wrath against it.
 - e. In other words, if there had been no Fall and no sin, we would only have a partial revelation of God, and what we would have would be lopsided.
 - f. But God determined that He would reveal all of His glory, and not merely some. So He decided to permit the Fall, to allow Adam’s race to be plunged into sin, that He might reveal to us all of what He is like. He gives to us a complete picture of Himself that we might marvel.
 - g. Now it is true that we will never fully comprehend even what He has revealed about Himself. But the fact is that He has done what He has done that He might reveal His glory.
 - h. Remember, God did not create the world for man’s glory, but for His. And man, at least redeemed man, benefits greatly from this plan.

3. But one question which has not been answered yet is what is the cause of God’s foreloving some and not others? What it is that He bases His choice on?
 - a. The Bible says that there is nothing in the persons themselves by which he makes that distinction. This is a blow to our ego, but it is true. That which makes one to differ from the other in the eyes of God is not in the objects themselves, rather, it is in the subject, God.
 - b. If God were to look ahead to what would become of the whole human race after the Fall, what could He possibly see that would influence Him to choose one and not another? Would there be any virtuous? Any righteous? And who sought after holiness? No. There would only be sinners. And we don’t see the worst of it, for if God did not restrain the sins of all men, we would all be far worse than we are. The reason He restrains it in the first place is so He can preserve the world while He calls out His elect.
 - c. So then, if all God sees is sinners, then how does He determine whom He will choose and whom not? He tells us that it is not in us, but in God.
 - d. God does not make any of His choices based upon what He sees we will be, for it is His choice that makes us what we are. He determines the culture we will be born in,

the time, the family. He determines what our experiences will be growing up, our natural inclinations inherited from our parents, our likes and dislikes. He determines what our personalities will be like, how great our intelligence will be, what we will look like, what physical abilities we will have. He is the One who determines all of this. How could this be the basis upon which He chooses us when He has chosen all these things from before eternity?

- e. Since it is not based upon what we do, for all we do is sin, and what we are like, for He is the One who makes us as we are, then we know that there is nothing left except God's good pleasure that makes one the object of mercy and the other an object of wrath. And this is what He tells us through the apostle Paul. "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*" (Eph. 1:4-6). "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, *but on God who has mercy*. . . . For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. . . . For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'" (Rom. 9:16, 15, 11, 12).
- f. This removes all of the glory for man and gives it all to God. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (11:36).
- g. So then, the new birth is the fountain of all of our blessings, and the foreknowledge of God is the fountain of the new birth. How much then ought we to give thanks to God for His infinite mercy and grace in bestowing it upon us? As we saw this morning, we are absolutely dependent upon God for our salvation. And when we see that this is true, then the glory of God shines through even more brightly, and we give Him the greater praise and honor which is His due.

II. But there is more. "Whom He predestinated, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."

- A. It is those whom He predestinated, notice, that receive the calling of God.
 1. In essence, the calling of God is that inward call of the Holy Spirit which accompanies the outward call of the Gospel. It is that which brings with it regeneration, or the new birth, so that the one so called will respond.
 2. It is those who are thus predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ -- as Paul puts it, chosen in Christ "that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4) -- , that are blessed with this greatest of blessings.
- B. And it is those who are called, who are justified.
 1. Those who receive the inward call of the Spirit, those who are enabled to whole-heartedly embrace the Lord Jesus Christ and all of His benefits, are those who are made just in the sight of God.
 2. We have seen in the recent past what justification is. It is not only that we appear as though we have never sinned, but also as though we have done everything right.
 3. Our sins are removed from us and were fully punished in Christ. And His

righteousness, which He earned by His perfect obedience to the Law, is given to us, and all of this as a free gift of His mere grace and mercy.

4. And now we stand blameless in His sight, fully acquitted before the Judge, and worthy to receive the blessings of heaven, through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. And lastly, notice that it is those who are justified who are glorified.
1. Those who are so acquitted in the sight of God on the day of His judgment will be received into the highest heaven. Their bodies will be made like Christ's glorified body (hence, they will be fully conformed to His image; Phil. 3:21), and they will inherit the kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34).
 2. Notice that all those who are at the beginning of this process will make it to the end.
 - a. Do you see any slippage? "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . . and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified."
 - b. Notice that all from each category make it into the next, and all make it to the end.
 - c. It is so certain that Paul even uses the past tense: called, justified, and glorified.
 - d. It is not that these things are true of us from all eternity, before we were born, or before we came to Christ. But they were so certain to take place that God can consider it an accomplished deed, for it was accomplished in Christ.
 - e. And do you think that if God foreloves someone from all eternity and determines that He will have him as a trophy of His love and grace that they will ever be lost? No. That is why ultimately "all things will work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."
 - f. Notice the optimism of the concluding verses, "What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 31-39).
 - g. People of God, the application to us this evening is clear. If you have received the new birth, which is evidenced by your faith in Christ and your seeking to walk according to all of His holy will, then you are foreloved by this divine Being, you are predestinated to become conformed to the image of His Son, your sins are forgiven, God presently views you as righteous, you will ultimately persevere by the grace of God until you are glorified, and there is nothing in heaven or earth which can sever that relationship. If this isn't something to rejoice in, I don't know what is! There

is no more precious knowledge on earth.

- h. And so if this knowledge isn't yours this evening, I would counsel you to seek Him until it is. Seek the Lord, seek for His grace. If you lack assurance, seek the Lord until He gives you a fresh revelation of your adoption as His child. If you have never known salvation in Christ, then seek Him until He opens heaven and pours out the gift of the new birth.
- i. We cannot know whether or not God has foreloved us from all eternity, except by the things we experience in life. Pursue the things of the Lord until these matters are settled. As Peter says, "Be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you"! (2 Peter 1:10). Amen.