

A Golden Chain? – Part 2

NOTE: Here we finally return to addressing the issue of Romans 8:29-30 and what they are about, and whether those verses actually support the Calvinist/Reformed theology concerning the foreknowledge of God and the predestination of the lives of persons, some to salvation, and others to damnation. Here we pick back up at establishing the context of Romans, Chapter 8, as it is crucial to understanding the passage of verses 29-30.

In examining the context of Romans, Chapter 8, we find that it begins with the believer, and how the believer is distinct from the lost, and what that change was under the law, or legally.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (*Romans 8:1-2*)

Where before, the law, especially the law of sin and death applied to the believer, upon believing the gospel, that law was done away with in Christ, and now the law of the spirit of life in Christ applies. It is confirmed that this belongs specifically to the believer, and not all men generally as evidenced by the following passage from I Corinthians, Chapter 15:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (*I Corinthians 15:20-22*)

Thus, to the LORD God there are two separate and distinct classes, or sets of people in this earth: those who are alive in Christ, and those who in Adam, are in their trespasses and

sins and are dead. ((This death is not a cessation of function. Rather it is a separation from fellowship with the LORD God. This is more fully discussed in the post "[Adam and the Fall – Part 6](#)") The distinction between these two sets cannot be overstated as it is quite radical spiritually. There is limited, one-way transference between the classes, and that is from the set of "in Adam" to the set of "in Christ." There is no "reverse" of this transference as multiple passages of Scripture confirm, one of which is John, Chapter 5, verse 24:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (*John 5:24*)

The use of the terms "everlasting life" and "shall not come into condemnation" in conjunction with "is passed from death unto life" clearly demonstrate the permanent, one-way transference or translation of the individual from being part of the set of "in Adam" to being part of the set of "in Christ." If we then understand the distinction between two classes, or sets, we will understand that they are radically different spiritually, and what applies to one, does not, and cannot apply to the other. Moreover, we must also understand that the sets are "mutually exclusive" and there is no reconciliation between the two.

In examining the differences between the two sets or classes, we do so again as it weighs heavily on what the Scripture teaches about "predestination" and "foreknowledge" and whether the Calvinist/Reformed understanding of Romans, Chapter 8, verses 29-30 is correct, and hence, their understanding of predestination and foreknowledge is correct. In explaining the differences, it is perhaps easier to provide brief statements of the particulars. There are three main differences that will be listed.

Inclusion or membership

In Adam

All individuals of the race of man, saving one, were or are members of this set. No person of the race of man is ever not in this set, save the Lord Jesus Christ. No man has a choice in belonging to this set for at least some portion of their life. Adam is the progenitor of this set.

In Christ

Only those who have repented and believed the gospel belong in this set. There is no person in this set who does not wish to be in this set. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Progenitor of this set.

Destiny

In Adam

The destiny of this set was foreordained to be suffering in Hell and the Lake of Fire. There is no other destination for the members of this set.

In Christ

The destiny of this set is Heaven, then the new heaven and new earth. There is no other destination for this set.

Character or Nature

In Adam

The nature the members of this set were born with does not change. Moreover, there are no changes predestined, or foreordained for this set. One does not have to do anything to remain in this set, and everything will correspondingly remain the same as when they first entered the set.

In Christ

The members of this set do not have the same nature as they were born with, as it was changed upon entering into this

set. Thus, there is a continual process of growth for the members of this set, and certain changes are foreordained for each individual in this set.

Hence we see that there are things predestined, or foreordained for the members of each set, but of the set of "in Christ" there are a number of things additionally foreordained to take place, that can never be applied to those who are "in Adam."

Now, to return specifically to the context of Romans 8, we find that, after briefly touching on the focus of a believer versus those who are not born-again (verses 3 through 9), it continues to focus on the changes that took place at salvation, and what effect those changes have on the believer, to wit:

And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (*Romans 8:10-14*)

Here we are reminded that, though we live in this flesh, we are not to allow it to rule, and are able to rule over it. This strength to rule over the flesh is so strong that, if we are failures in it, volumes are spoken about whether we are actually in Christ or not. Hence, this addresses a condition that only believers would know about and struggle with, having been previously instructed (Chapter 7) concerning the war between the flesh and the soul. The chapter then continues on from this point addressing items that are even more specific

to believers only, and speaking nothing about those who are not in Christ. As we can see, the chapter ends on a very high note for the child of God, in that it states:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 8:38-39*)

In all, Chapter 8 is addressed to believers, and concerns subjects that only believers are concerned about, and only believers struggle with. After all, the lost, which are those in Adam, have no struggle between their flesh and their soul, nor are they concerned about failing in the flesh. Moreover, it is no concern of theirs to make sure the salvation they professed, as they professed no salvation in Christ, and have experienced no change of heart and soul. These things are exclusive to those who are in Christ, who yet live in this world.

So then, let us ask, if verses 29-30 only apply to, and sit specifically in the context of those who are in Christ, and address nothing about mankind in general, why then is this exercise engaged in:

Let's review the bidding. If we supply the word some to the Golden Chain the result is fatal to the foreknowledge view of predestination because it would have God predestinating some people who are not called. Since the view teaches that God's predestination is based upon God's foreknowledge of people's positive responses to the call of the gospel, then clearly the view collapses if some are predestined with a call.

The supplying of the word all is equally fatal to the foreknowledge view. This difficulty centers on the relationship of calling to justification. If all who are called are justified, then the passage could mean one of two

things:

A) All who hear the gospel outwardly are justified; or
B) All who are called by God inwardly are justified. ((pp. 129-133, *Chosen of God*, R.C. Sproul, Tyndale House, 1994, ISBN 0842313354))

and again,

If you believe option A, you are a universalist, that everyone will be saved.

If you believe option B, all who are called inwardly by God are justified.

If all whom God calls inwardly are justified and all whom God predestines are called inwardly, then it follows that God's foreknowledge concerns more than a mere prior awareness of the free decisions humans will make. God knows from eternity whom he will inwardly call. All who he inwardly calls he will also justify. If option B is the correct understanding of the Golden Chain, then it is clear that God gives one kind of call to some people that he does not give to everyone. Since all who are called are justified and since not everyone is justified, then it follows that calling is a rather significant divine activity that some human beings receive and others do not. ((quoted from Aaron, post comments, part belongs to R.C. Sproul, part to Aaron))

when the passage plainly states:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 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. (Romans 8:29-30)

which only and ever addresses those who are in Christ, and

touches nothing concerning mankind in general?

Since there are such distinct differences between those in Christ, and those in Adam, why would any exercise in attempting to apply verses 29-30 to all men everywhere be done? What would be the point of trying to draw a conclusion about those who are in Adam?

But, the Calvinist argues: What about the calling?

Here then is their point, and a point that requires answer about going beyond Scripture, and putting words in the mouth of God. They claim:

FOREKNOWLEDGE-PREDESTINATION-CALLING-JUSTIFICATION-GLORIFICATION. The crucial problem here has to do with the relationship of calling and justification. What does Paul mean by "calling". In theology we distinguish between God's external call and God's internal call. We find the external call in the preaching of the gospel. Not everyone who hears the outward call of the gospel becomes a believer. Sometimes the gospel falls on deaf ears.

Now we know that only those who respond to the outward call of the gospel in faith are justified. Justification is by faith. But again, not everyone who hears the outward preaching of the gospel responds in faith. Therefore we must conclude that not all who are CALLED outwardly are justified.

But Paul says in Romans that those whom God CALLS, he JUSTIFIES. If Paul does not mean that ALL who are CALLED are JUSTIFIED, the only alternative would be that SOME who are justified. If we supply the word Some in the GOLDEN CHAIN it would read like this:

Some of those he foreknew, he also predestined. Some of those he predestined, he also called. Some of those he called, these he also justified. Some of those he justified, he also glorified. ((pp. 129-133, Chosen of God, R.C. Sproul, Tyndale

House, 1994, ISBN 0842313354))

However, to pick up on “calling” and try to work out who is called, how and why they are called, and determine that this “proves” predestination and election, is to start in the middle of a statement that only applies to those in Christ, and attempt to apply to mankind in general. This is equivalent to digging into a barrel of apples and then attempting to conclude something about oranges. Here the apostle Paul, by the Holy Ghost, is explaining the work of God in the life of the believer. He is not attempting to show how people come to Christ, or how the LORD God brings people to Christ. We know this by the context of the chapter, and the specific construction of the passage:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 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.
(Romans 8:29-30)

Here we start with “*whom he did foreknow*” which is to say those known before. Now, there is much to state about this, but for now we shall leave it with simply “*knowing beforehand*” which is a portion of what is stated in “*whom he did foreknow*” and is certainly applicable here. Thus, those He knew beforehand, “*he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,*” which is to state there is an end for those He knew beforehand, which He predetermined that they should be, indeed will be, conformed to the image of Christ.

Notice now that the focus is expressly on the believer, and on the work of God in the life of the believer, and this focus is not directed elsewhere at any time. Just as the Calvinist thinks it is crucial to focus on the middle of the statement and start from there, it is far more crucial, and infinitely

more correct to follow the set sequence of Scripture and how the passage is laid out. Hence, there is a sequence defined here which we would do well to pay heed to. This sequence sets in the larger context of the foreknowledge of God, and is defined by the phrase “to be conformed to the image of his Son” and is tied together by a series of connectives which is the phrase “he also.” Therefore, to follow the logic of the passage we find:

Whom he did foreknow:

he also

did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son

he also

called

he also

justified

he also

glorified

Unlike the Calvinist/Reformed reconstruction of the passage, the passage remains totally silent concerning anyone, or anything else outside of “in Christ.” What the passage conveys concerns everyone who is predestined to be conformed to the image of His dear Son, who is Jesus Christ. Thus, everyone He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of Christ, was called, was justified, was glorified. Or, put differently, everyone predestinated to be like Christ, is:

called

justified

glorified.

We can see then that to focus on “called” and then try to work some logic about those who do not respond to the call of God, is to step totally outside of the sequence and flow of the passage and apply it to something it was never intended to be applied to.

To be continued . . .
