

“The Preservation of the Saints”
Romans 8:29-39
Dr. Jerry Nelson

Ruth Calkin of Claremont, California is a poet.
In the poem entitled “At Such Times” Mrs. Calkin captures the very response that I think God wants us to have from our study of Romans 8.

At Such Times

Ruth Harms Calkin

<http://www.tagnet.org/lewistonsda/Poems.htm>

God, there are times
In the midst of heartache and heartbreak
When there is no comfort, no solace
Anywhere at all.
There are times
When in my crumbling state of mind
I feel I can no longer endure --
Not for a day, not even an hour.
It is at such times, O God
That I draw heavily
Upon Your unfathomable love.
At such times I implore
Your transforming peace.
At such times I live
By the power and promises
Of a Father who cares infinitely more
Than I can begin to grasp or comprehend.
Today, dear God, is a "such time."

Life can be so haphazard.

Yes, there are good times, great times.

But there are also times when it feels that everything is out of control.

How do we keep our bearings in the midst of life rushing at us?

And how do we keep from discouragement when it appears that everything ends in death.

We know we are Christians but there are times when we wonder about God, we wonder about ourselves, and we wonder about the purpose and future of it all.

If we were able to find and read the personal journals of the Christians who lived in Rome in the Apostle Paul's day, I think we would read of the same joys, fears, questions and concerns that face us today.

Romans, chapter 8, probably more than any other passage in the Bible, is meant to strengthen our faith; to build our confidence in the preserving power of God.

Paul would say it this way elsewhere:

- Philippians 1:6 "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
- 2 Timothy 1:12 "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

But here, to the Roman Christians and to us, he camps on that certainty.

Romans 8:28-39

"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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be

slaughtered.”³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Can anyone doubt that Romans 8 is meant to encourage those who are truly Christian?

Romans 8:1,2 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:16-17 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

And in the meantime, while waiting for that glory that will be ours with Christ, when he comes again, God helps us:

Romans 8:26-28 “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.²⁷ 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.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.

And what is God’s purpose for us?

Verses 29-30 answer that question for us.

Romans 8:29-30 “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.³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

- Should I go to college?

- What should be my major?
- Should I get married?
- Where should we live?
- What kind of job should I take?
- Which church should we commit to?
- How do we raise our kids to be faithful Christians and responsible citizens?

All of these questions and many more are questions we need to answer.

But we'll get off track, we'll get lost in the weeds of the particulars, if we don't have an idea of overarching purpose to which all of these decisions lead.

God's ultimate purpose for me is not to be a college graduate, or a parent, or a stock analyst, or to be a good church member.

Paul wants us to step back and see what God ultimately has in mind. He describes it in verse 29 as being predestined to conformed to the likeness of his son and in verse 30 as being glorified.

We've thought about this in previous sermons in this series, so I just want to summarize it here.

From before the beginning God's intention has been to call out a people whom he would rescue from sin's damaging and damning control and would reshape into the likeness of his Son, Jesus.

- We were made to enjoy God.
- We were made to experience the perfect character of God – his love, joy, peace, gentleness, mercy and grace.
- We were made to have and reflect that character to each other.

That's God's purpose for us.

He is working out that purpose in us now and he will complete it when Jesus comes again.

That purpose points us in the right direction for all the intermediate questions of life.

But in verses 28-39, Paul's point is **not** so much to show again what God's purpose is for us **as to show us how certain we may be that God will in fact accomplish his purpose.**

Paul is **not** here trying to convince people to become Christians.
He is **not** even here trying to convince Christians to live holy lives.

He is here showing us how confident we may be that God will do what he has purposed to do.

We can count on it.

We can know that nothing can keep God from accomplishing in our lives what he has intended from before the creation of the world.

Listen again to the way Paul declares this great truth:

Romans 8:29-30 "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. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

Paul here uses a literary device called a sorites (Sew! re teez)

This is when the predicate of the first line becomes the subject of the next line.

Those God foreknew, he predestined.

Those he predestined, he called.

Those he called, he justified.

And those he justified, he glorified.

On the lighter side, one man I read gave another example of a sorites:

I have quit playing golf.

The reason for that is simple.

I needed a ball and I went to the store and purchased one.

And that which was purchased was struck.

And that which was struck flew.

And that which flew landed.

And that which landed splashed.

So I quit. (From Tom Browning's sermon on Romans 8:29-39
http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/mp3/romans_browningpdf.html)

Paul's point in using this device is to show that **the end result, glorified, was assured right from the beginning, foreknowledge.**

These acts of God toward us are linked in such a way that nothing can break the chain.

We need to look at each of the links briefly to see how comprehensive God's plan is and how certain the outcome is.

First, Paul writes, "For those God foreknew..."

This is an important word.

Some suggest that because God knows everything, he knew ahead of time who would respond to his offer of life and he predestined, called, justified and will glorify those.

That is the Arminian view held by some.

But that is not the way the word is used here, as I will show you in minute.

In fact if we found out that the word "foreknew" meant nothing more than knowing ahead of time, it would defeat the very purpose of this whole chapter.

If our salvation is ultimately based on us, on our ability to choose God, then we ought to know that we have no hope.

It can't be anchored in something so helpless and fickle as my choice of God, it must be anchored in God for it to be worth anything.

Foreknow is used two ways in the NT:

1. In fact twice it does indeed mean simply to know ahead of time.

Acts 26:5 "They have known me for a long time

2 Peter 3:17 "since you already know this,

But the other four uses (including the one here) refer not to knowing ahead of time but to choosing or determining ahead of time.

Romans 11:2 "God did not reject his people, whom he **foreknew**."

Speaking of Israel (Abraham and Jacob and their spiritual descendants), it is so clear that God chose them for a relationship with God.

It wasn't just that God knew ahead of time that they would choose God.

This "foreknowing" is much stronger than that.

Here's the way the OT declared it: Deuteronomy 7:7,8 "The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you.

God's foreknowing is not reaction but action – God chose to love them.

1 Peter 1:20 "He (Jesus) was **chosen** (foreknown) before the creation of the world..."

Did the Father choose the Son because the Father merely knew ahead of time what the Son would do or does this mean that **the triune God determined before time** what the Son would do? Clearly the latter; his being foreknown is a particular kind of foreknowing being nearly synonymous with being chosen.

Acts 2:23 Jesus "was handed over to you by God's set purpose and **foreknowledge**..."

Does this mean that Jesus died merely because God foresaw that the Romans would kill Jesus or that again, the triune God determined before time what would happen.

When the word "foreknew" is used to describe this unique relationship we have with God, it goes far beyond mere knowledge before hand.

As in the OT it stresses relationship, even intimacy as in Adam "knew" his wife.

Genesis 18:19 God speaking of Abraham said, "For I have chosen (known) him..."

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart."

The parallels in this verse make clear what "knew" means.

To "know" here mean to set his affection on.

To foreknow is to fore-love.

As theologian John Murray put it, “This is not the foresight (that recognizes a difference but the foresight that **makes** a difference to exist, not the foresight that recognizes existence, but the foresight that **determines** existence.” (in Moo, NICNT Romans, 533)

There are some who say that Paul is here describing the choice of the church as a whole and not individuals.

But in this context it is individuals that Paul clearly has in mind. He is giving the specific Christians in Rome reasons to be assured.

I am camping on this first word, “foreknew” because as any building is only as strong as its foundation, so this assurance by Paul is only as strong as this first word.

I want you to see the word that Paul uses when he gives the same assurance to the Ephesian Christians.

First of all notice that he is describing the same events in our salvation:

Ephesians 1:4-14

“For he **chose** (elect) us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he **predestined** us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ... We have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins... In him we were also chosen...in order that we...might be for the praise of his glory... And you also were included in Christ **when you heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit **guaranteeing our inheritance** until the redemption of those who are God’s possession...”

When Paul describes the origin of our salvation in Ephesians 1:3 he uses the word “chosen/elect.”

When he describes it in Romans 8:29 he uses the word “foreknew.” They are the same truth.

The basis of God’s choice of us is his foreknowing, choosing, electing love – not for what he sees in us but who he is.

Then God does something with that intimate choice to love us, that foreknowing, fore-loving - He predestined us.

Romans 8:29 “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.”

To predestine is to decide ahead of time to make something happen. This word predestined is used a number of times in the Bible.

- Acts 4:28 “They did what your power and will had **decided beforehand (predestined)** should happen.”
- Ephesians 1:5 “In love **he predestined** us to be adopted as his sons...”
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “from the beginning **God chose (predestined) you** to be saved...”
- 2 Timothy 1:9, “God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—**not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose (predestining)** and grace...” (See also 1 Corinthians 2:7)

J.I. Packer points out that some say they don’t believe in “predestination” but in fact all Christians actually do.

First of all, every Christian gives thanks to God for their salvation.

Why? Because we all know that if we are saved it is by God’s grace, not our merit.

And secondly all Christians ask God to save others.

Why? Because we know that if God doesn’t do that saving work, no one would be saved.

As he concludes it, “On our feet we may have arguments about it, but on our knees we are all agreed.” (Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 12)

Because of nothing in us, God set his affection on us (he foreknew us) and then he determined (predestined) to make us like Jesus.

One man wrote, “Everyone who is eventually saved can only ascribe his salvation, from the first step to the last, to God’s favor and act. Human merit must be excluded: and this can only be by tracing back the work far beyond the obedience which evidences (salvation), or even the faith which appropriates salvation; (tracing it back) to the act of spontaneous favor on the part of that God who foresees and foreordains from eternity all his works.” (C.J. Vaughn In Stott, 250)

**But predestination is not the end:
Romans 8:30 “And those he predestined, he also called...”**

Every use of this word in the NT when God is doing the “calling” means God’s **effective** summoning.

“Effective” means that the ones who are called, come!

It is not that God calls out and some respond; no, when God calls, the hearer responds because God ensures it.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has **called**, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the **wisdom of God.**” (See also: Jude 1 “To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ...” and Revelation 17:14)

Jesus said in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives me will come to me...”

When Jesus called out to dead Lazarus, what happened?

Did Lazarus lie in the grave wondering whether he would come out?

Of course not, when God granted him life, he acted.

So it is with us, when God calls us out, we respond, we trust him.

It is called irresistible grace.

It is the effectual call described in the Westminster Catechism: “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and

renewing our wills, he both persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”

See also 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

Romans 8:29-30 “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.

And those God called he also justified.

This was Paul’s theme through the first five chapters of his letter.

Those God calls do in fact respond in faith and are declared righteous in God’s sight through the sacrificial death of God the Son.

And so Paul concludes, **“those he justified, he also glorified.”**

With this word “glorified,” Paul is back to the main theme of this chapter.

Glorified is a reference to our new bodies on the new earth forever experiencing and reflecting the glory of God.

Do you see it, what God starts he finishes!

You can count on it.

And, praise to God, it all depends on him, not me!

Listen to Jesus describe the certainty of the true Christian’s future: John 6:37-39 “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. (See also

John 10:27-29)

I have titled his message “The Preservation of the Saints.”

I meant for that title to be a bit of a play on words.

We often speak of “The Perseverance of the Saints” meaning that those whom God saves he truly saves and transforms – real Christians do persevere in the faith, they evidence in their lives the transforming power of God.

Today however I am speaking to the “preserving” power of God behind our “perseverance.”

It is because God preserves, keeps, and protects us that we can persevere.

Christian, this you can know – your relationship with God is secure because God has determined to preserve his saints to the very end.

Paul goes on to conclude this chapter by saying that because we are so secure in God’s determined love, nothing can separate us from him.

Paul communicates this by asking a number of rhetorical questions:

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Just last year, I did an entire sermon on these verses and so I won’t repeat it here but I will post that message on the Soundliving.org website.

But before leaving it, I want to give you an illustration of the effect of these words.

John Wesley, the famous preacher of the 1700s, was a life-long opponent of slavery and particularly the slave trade.

He was therefore a strong supporter of the English abolitionist, William Wilberforce.

Wesley neared death during a time when it appeared that all of Wilberforce’s efforts would be for nothing.

The last letter Wesley wrote was to Wilberforce and in it he said, “My dear sir, Unless the Divine Power has raised you up, I see not how you can go (on) with your glorious enterprise... Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition from men and devils. But if God is

for us, who can be against us? Are all of them together stronger than He? Go on in the name of God.”

Soon after this a visitor came to Wesley’s bedside but in dying weakness, Wesley could not easily make himself heard.

Then with great effort he called out his final words.

With an arm raised in token of victory, he spoke in labored but triumphant tones, “The best of all is, God is with us.” (Frank Boreham, *A Casket of Cameos*, Abingdon, 1924, p99)

In words of even greater confidence, words carried along by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul closes this section of his letter with some of the most triumphant words ever penned:

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Bud Kratzer, of our church, was an elder here for several years.

4 ½ years ago Bud was diagnosed with life-threatening liver cancer.

He was told that he’d be fortunate to live 5 years.

His battle has been long and hard and sadly, the latest test numbers were not good.

Bud truly takes each day at a time.

In the moments of greatest temptation to despair, Bud can lay hold of this great truth, “**Nothing, not death itself**, can separate you from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

She's young, she has children, and her husband has left, providing no support.

How do you manage financially, how do you parent, how do you keep on when the future looks so bleak?

She lays hold of this great truth, "**Nothing, not even life at its worst**, can separate you from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

It was April, 1945, eleven days before the Allied forces liberated the prison where Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was being held.

In a last fit of evil the Nazis sentenced him to death.

Ten years later a military doctor reported witnessing Bonhoeffer's kneeling in prayer before his execution.

The doctor said, "In the almost 50 years I have worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."

Bonhoeffer's last words were: "This is the end, for me the beginning of life."

Remember "**Nothing, not even evil**, can separate you from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Tiffany Johnson was one of two killed at the YWAM school in Arvada last Sunday.

Rich Peterson received an e-mail on Wednesday in which a man described what he heard at the funeral.

Speaking of the young woman who died, someone said, "She was lying in a pool of blood while the gunman fled.

A friend was holding her head and Tiffany asked, "Is it serious?"

Her friend responded, "Yes, I think it is."

Tiffany then said with her last breath, Well then, that's what it's all about. It's all about Jesus." (from Dean Cowles in e-mail dated 12/12/07)

To Tiffany, to her friend and to her family we cry out with Paul, "**Nothing** can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Closing Song:

Twixt gleams of joy and clouds of doubt
 Our feelings come and go;
 Our best estate is tossed about
 In ceaseless ebb and flow.
 No mood of feeling, form of thought,
 Is constant for a day;
 But thou, O Lord, thou changest not:
 The same thou art always.

I grasp thy strength, make it mine own,
 My heart with peace is blest;
 I lose my hold, and then comes down
 Darkness, and cold unrest.
 Let me no more my comfort draw
 From my frail grasp of thee,
 In this alone rejoice with awe -
 Thy mighty grasp of me.

Thy purpose of eternal good
 Let me but surely know;
 On this I'll lean - let changing mood
 And feeling come or go -
 Glad when thy sunshine fills my soul,
 Not lorn when clouds o'er cast
 since thou within thy sure control
 Of love dost hold me fast.

BENEDICTION from Jude 24-25 "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Additional notes on the following pages

John MacArthur on “Foreknowledge” in the sermon “The Progress of Salvation.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation." Second Timothy 1:9, "He saved us, called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to His own purpose." There it is again. This is all bound up in the eternal counsel of God which He Himself determined before the world began. And that's why, as I told you the last time, John 1:12 says that we have become the children of God not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but of God. Putting it simply, salvation does not occur because of what you decided. Salvation occurs because of what God has already decided. It's all bound up in His eternal purpose...

And so much of modern evangelism today fails to grasp this. So much of modern evangelism leaves people the idea that somehow their eternal destiny is based upon a decision that they make. Scripture frankly has quite a different emphasis. In the first place, an unregenerate man is dead in trespasses and sin and utterly unable to respond to the gospel. The god of this world has blinded his mind. He is ignorant. He is the captive to sin, so much so according to 1 Corinthians 2:14 it says, "A natural man," that's an unconverted man, "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, they're foolishness to him, he cannot understand them." He can't. On his own he can't make that decision. It's impossible...

Even if you agree that God just saw what people were going to do, you really don't save God from some imagined injustice, because you still have to ask the question if (God) knew people were going to choose against Him and go to hell forever, why did He create them? And if you say He didn't have any power over whether they were created or not, you really have a problem because now you have a God that's less than sovereign, you have a God that's not the King of the universe and He's not in control, and that's not the God of the Bible...

Then you have to ask the question...all right, if He just looks down the road and sees some people believe and some people not believe, you have to ask the question...where did their faith come from? Is it natural for an unregenerate, wicked, blind, hopeless, helpless sinner to all of a sudden exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ? No, it's not natural, it's impossible, right? It's absolutely impossible...can't happen, couldn't do it. I mean, the terminology is

dead in trespasses and sins, cannot understand the things of God, blinded, ignorant, hopeless, helpless, desperately wicked, no knowledge of God is in them. They love darkness. There's no way that this could mean foresight...

So, back to Romans chapter 8, when you see the word "foreknowledge" there, of course there is a foreordaining element to it, and of course there is a foresight element to it as God can see down the path. But there is also a fore-love in it. God foreordains, predetermines to love a certain person, a predetermined, foreordained, foreseen love relationship born in the eternal purpose of God. That's whom He foreknew. He would come to know them, that's why "fore" is there, it hadn't happened yet, He foreknew. He would come eventually to an intimate relationship with them down the way through redemptive history. <http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/90-181.htm>

Sam Storms on “What would it mean to God if a true believer could fully and finally fall away from saving grace?”

- He would not be worthy of glory nor of our adoring praise and worship- Jude 24,25
- His purpose in redemption would fail and unravel (Romans 8:29-30)
- His will would be frustrated and fail of fulfillment (John 6:38-40)
- It would mean that the Father has refused to answer the prayers of His Son (John 17:11-15)
- God, supposedly all-powerful, would be exposed as impotent and helpless (John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:35-39)
- God would prove to be faithless (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He died (John 6:37-40; 10:14-18,27-30)
- Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He was raised Romans 4:24-25
- Christ will have failed in the purpose for which He now intercedes in the presence of the Father Rom. 8:31-34; 1 John 2:1-2; Heb. 7:25 Christ will fail to accomplish the goal for which He is to return to this earth John 6:40b
- Christ will prove to have been a liar John 6:37; 10:27-28
- The Holy Spirit will have failed in his work of sealing. 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30

- The Holy Spirit will have failed in his ministry as a pledge of the future consummation of our redemption 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5

<http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/a-defense-of-the-perseverance-of-the-saints-part-i> (Parts 1 and 2)

Charles Spurgeon on TWO KINDS OF “CALL” IN THE BIBLE:

“Now, in considering this solemn subject, let me remark that there are two kinds of callings mentioned in the Word of God. The first is the general call, which is in the gospel sincerely given to everyone that heareth the word. The duty of the minister is to call souls to Christ, he is to make no distinction whatever--"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The trumpet of the gospel sounds aloud to every man in our congregations--"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man" (Prov. 8:4). This call is sincere on God's part; but man by nature is so opposed to God, that this call is never effectual, for man disregards it, turns his back upon it, and goes his way, caring for none of these things. But mark, although this call be rejected, man is without excuse in the rejection; the universal call has in it such authority, that the man who will not obey it shall be without excuse in the day of judgment. When thou art commanded to believe and repent, when thou art exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, the sin lies on thy own head if thou dost despise the exhortation, and reject the commandment. And this solemn text drops an awful warning: "How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation." But I repeat it, this universal call is rejected by man; it is a call, but it is not attended with divine force and energy of the Holy Spirit in such a degree as to make it an unconquerable call, consequently men perish, even though they have the universal call of the gospel ringing in their ears. The bell of God's house rings every day, sinners hear it, but they put their fingers in their ears, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and though they are bidden and are called to the wedding (Luke 14:16,17,18), yet they will not come, and by not coming they incur God's wrath, and he declareth of such,--"None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24).

The call of our text is of a different kind; it is not a universal call, it is a special, particular, personal, discriminating, efficacious, unconquerable, call. This call is sent to the predestinated, and to them only; they by grace hear the call, obey it, and receive it. These are they who can now say, "Draw us, and we will run after thee."

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/predest.txt>

Leon Morris on the doctrine of election (and by implication "foreknowledge"):

"We naturally think that we are completely free. If we are saved, we hold, it is because we have in our freedom decided to turn away from evil and to commit our lives to God... But the doctrine of election tells us that we can never do that in our own strength and wisdom. Left to ourselves, we would never make the motion of giving up evil and turning to God. It is only because God works in us FIRST that we come to him. And because he does this good work (of electing) us, we have a deep assurance that we could never have if it all depended on us." (Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians, 16)

John Stott on the supposed evil of the doctrine of Predestination

It doesn't foster arrogance but rather it excludes all boasting. God didn't choose us because he foresaw we would have faith but solely according to his good pleasure – because he chose to love us. It doesn't foster uncertainty about whether we are predestined but rather gives certainty of our relationship with God because we know it is all of God. Unbelievers aren't concerned about their relationship with God unless the Spirit convicts them.

It doesn't foster apathy or complacency because the Bible is clear about our responsibility. Romans 6 is all about that issue. (from Stott, Romans, 252)

And I (Jerry Nelson) add, "It doesn't stifle evangelism or world evangelization because it is only our belief that God **will** break through the unbelief of others that we have any reason to witness or any confidence in the effectiveness of evangelism and missions.

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