

“Predestination”?

by Wayne Goff

*“For whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He **predestined**, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30).*

Romans 8 definitely teaches the doctrine of “**predestination**.” However, it does not teach the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. So what is the difference? Actually, it is pretty simple to explain and to see.

Calvinism teaches that God **arbitrarily chose** (**predestined**) before time began to save certain specific individuals. Those whom God chose would be saved unconditionally and irrevocably. Thus the idea of “once saved, always saved.” But if you pay careful attention to our text you will something different.

Romans 8:29 says that there were those God “foreknew” and “predestined.” But it doesn’t say specific individuals were so acknowledged. It says a **class of people** were recognized – “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” So rather than teach that Bill, James and Margaret were chosen before time began to be saved, the Bible teaches that the group that would voluntarily choose to “be conformed to the image of His Son” were foreknown and predestined. That’s a big difference, but it’s a simple distinction.

Here is the dilemma: (1) Did God arbitrarily choose to save some without any choice on their part? Or (2) Did God purposefully choose to save those individuals who would hear, believe and obey the Gospel, thus causing them to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus? I think the text makes it abundantly clear. But those who have been indoctrinated with Calvinism will have a hard time “seeing” the obvious in this text.

“**Predestined**” comes from a Greek word which only appears six times in the New Testament (**Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11**). The word simply means to “determine beforehand.” God did not determine beforehand which individuals would be saved, but the kind of individuals which would be saved. Read **Ephesians 1:5, 11** to see this distinction again. Paul argues there that we have been “predestined ... **to adoption (HOW) as sons by Jesus Christ**” and that it was “according to the purpose of Him (**WHY**) who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” God’s eternal purpose is what was predetermined.

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