

Romans 8:28-30

Today we're going to take a look at the Doctrine of **Election**. Do you know what it is? Would you be able to **explain** it to someone else - perhaps to someone who is new to Christianity? Even if you do know what it is and are able to explain it, a new-comer to the faith probably wouldn't understand what you are talking about, because the Doctrine of Election isn't very **logical**. Adding to the confusion, this doctrine has been perverted and **distorted** by many church bodies throughout the ages. Some have proposed that election is a **license to sin**, reasoning that since they have already been elected for salvation, then they are free to do anything they want with **no consequences**. Others have concluded that if God elected some for **salvation**, then He must have also elected some for **damnation**. Both of these ideas are preposterous, but they do show us that election is a **difficult** subject. However, that's no reason for us to shy away from it. Paul explained it to the Romans in the three verses of our text, and they were the **richer** for it. We too, if we are not going to remain as **babies** in the faith, must also delve into the more **complex** portions of Scripture, and grow stronger from the meat which is offered there.

Our text is one of those meaty portions of Scripture, so it's going to take a lot of **concentration** on our part. I hope you had a good breakfast this morning, because today we're going to be following the Apostle Paul on **A Walk Through The Christian's Life**. As we take this walk, it will be most beneficial to concentrate on two things - the **comfort** of our election, and the **certainty** of our glory. This particular walk extends from before the world began, all the way to living in God's eternal kingdom in heaven. That's a pretty long walk, so let's lace up our hiking boots and get started!

We read, "*Those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.*" Way back before God created the world, He **chose** us according to His foreknowledge. God **foreknew** us. That doesn't mean that God chose us because He, in His omniscience, foresaw that we would do **good works**, or even that we would have **faith** in His Son. If that were the case, then God's election would have been an election by **works**, based on what **we** have **done**. However, the fact of the matter is that our election is an election of **grace**, based on what **Christ** has done **for** us. Paul wrote later in this same letter, "*At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; for if it were, grace would*

no longer be grace.” Grace is God’s **love** for us - a love which we have not **earned**, and a love which we don’t **deserve**. God didn’t choose us because of our works, but rather when God foreknew us, He **set His heart** on us - and He did it purely out of **grace**, just because it was what **He wanted** to do. God wanted His Son to have many brothers, so He chose **us**, as Paul wrote in the first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, *“God predestined us to be **adopted** as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with **His pleasure and will.**”* We have been **adopted** as God’s children. And as God’s children, we are Christ’s **brothers**, for He is the only begotten Son of God. We have been chosen in Christ, and now we are His. Jesus said in His high priestly prayer, *“Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me **before the creation of the world.**”* This is a position of honor for Christ because He is the firstborn among His many brothers. He is not only the **author** of our salvation, but also without Jesus there would **be** no salvation at all. What an honor it is for us to be called His **brothers**, and to be chosen to spend all eternity with Him in God’s **family**.

But this eternal decree of God, established before creation, only marks the first portion of our **Walk Through The Christian’s Life**. As we step around the bend we notice that God also carries out that decree in our lives here in **time**, through a number of divine actions. Again we read, *“Those He **predestined**, He also **called**; those He **called**, He also **justified**; those He **justified**, He also **glorified.**”* God **called** us here in time. This calling is not because of our works either. Paul told Timothy, *“God has saved us and called us to a holy life - **not** because of anything we have done, but because of **His own purpose and grace.**”* How much clearer can you get? God **calls**, and we are to **hear** Him.

But our calling is not only heard with our **ears** - it is also heard with our **heart**. And by God’s grace alone, that calling is not **rejected** by us, but rather is **received**. God changed our hearts and **turned us around**. Peter put it this way, *“You were like sheep going astray, but now you have **returned** to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”* This **conversion** didn’t come about as the result of some special, emotional, inner call as some believe. Rather, God changed our hearts and lives by means of the **Gospel** in His **Word** and **Sacraments**. That is where the power lies to change men’s hearts - **not** in our **emotions**.

But there is still **more** to our journey. God has not only **put** us on the road to heaven, He also **keeps** us on that road. God daily sends us His Holy Spirit to

strengthen and **preserve** us in the true faith by means of His Word and Sacrament, that we might receive life everlasting. And there is still **more** which God has done for us. He has declared us **righteous** - certainly not because we **deserve** to be called righteous through our own merit, for we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God - but rather, He **gives** us **Christ** as our righteousness. Jesus made full satisfaction for our sins through His **sinless life**, and through His **innocent sufferings and death**. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, absolving us from our sin and guilt, and accepting us as righteous through Christ.

During this **Walk Through The Christian's Life**, we have seen how gracious and merciful our Heavenly Father is to us. We have seen how God **chose** us before the world began, and how He **called** us and declared us **righteous** here in time. But there is still one **more** part of the Christian's life that we should take a look at this morning - the **home stretch** - for our text tells us that God also **glorifies** us. In reality, this glory still lies in the **future**, yet Paul speaks of it as though it has already **taken place**. And in a way, it **has**, because God is the one who has determined all these things. God said, "*I will choose, call, justify, and glorify these people,*" and when **God** determines to do something, it is as good as **done**.

The one big question which still remains is perhaps a question which you have asked yourself at one time or another. "Am **I** one of God's **elect**?" Martin Luther asked himself that question **many** times, and as a result, he **hated** the Doctrine of Election - at least for a **time**. It filled him with **terror** because he thought, "If I'm **not** one of the elect, then I can't be **saved**." And there were many times when Luther **felt** as though he was **not** saved. Sometimes **we** feel that way **too**. We ask ourselves questions like, "How can I be **sure** I am one of God's **elect**?" or, "What if I **fall away** from the faith **later on** in life?" But questions like these will only fill us with **fear**. Paul encourages us to **stop asking** such questions, and simply leave the matter in **God's** hands. He wrote, "*We know that in **all things** God works for the **good** of those who **love Him**, who have been **called according to His purpose**.*" There is **certainty** in those words. We **know** it, because we know our firm and immovable **God**. And when Paul says that God works in all things for our **good**, that includes **everything** - hardships, trials, even a pastoral vacancy. God uses trials for our spiritual **good** to break us off from **sin**, to bring us nearer to **Himself**, to wean us away from the **sinful world**, and to prepare us for **heaven**. It's true that at times trials are also used to **chasten** us, but even then, God is treating us as **sons** whom He **loves**. The writer to the Hebrews

says, “No *discipline* seems *pleasant* at the time, but *painful*. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of *righteousness* and *peace* for those who have been trained by it.” God’s chastening always has a **purpose**, and whatever that purpose might be, it will always be for our **good**.

So, having that blessed certainty, what should we do when it appears that God has **forsaken** us, or that He is **angry** with us? Should we **wonder** whether we are members of God’s **elect**? No, it would be much better to ask ourselves this question, “Do you **believe in the Gospel**?” Some people think that they will be saved whether they believe in the Gospel or not. They think, “If I’m one of the **elect**, I’ll be saved **regardless** of what I **do** or **believe**.” But that’s **not** the case. The Bible says that the elect are chosen, “*Through the sanctification of the **Spirit**, and **belief** in the truth.*” Therefore, if you **believe in the Gospel**, you **are** one of the **elect**, and all the **promises** which God has made concerning His elect apply to **you**. Then you have been **chosen, called, justified, and glorified** - and all things work together for your **good**. When the Doctrine of Election is looked at from **that** point of view, it becomes a great **comfort**, and takes **away** our fears. And that it exactly what God **meant** it to do. Remember, He is our loving Father, stretching out His everlasting arms to catch us when we are about to fall. His comfort is sure. Let no one **rob** you of that comfort as you **Walk Through Your Christian Life** here on earth, striving to reach your heavenly goal. Amen.