

ROMANS Part 75

Chapter 8:28-30

Designated; called; justified; glorified.



Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose 29 that, whom He

foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren. 30 Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also.

Who am I to write about God? I ask myself that question this morning, and it makes me want to cry. Some days I feel so not up to the task. This is how it is most days. Only the exceptional day finds me vigorous of soul. I keep telling you that I'm scraping by, and it's true. I am operating, always, at the edge of my ability. This debility of ability rarely stops me from working, however. Whatever it is that I have, I give to Him, then to you. The Little Drummer Boy had no gift to bring—*pah-rum-pa-pa-pum*—that was fit to give a King, and so on. So he played his drum. Mary nodded. I love that line: "Mary nodded." Best line ever in any song, in my opinion. Two words. That line always makes me cry. "The ox and lamb kept time" isn't bad either, but to see that nod of Mary is all I need some days.

That woman was a weak human being, just like me. I'm speaking of Mary now, the mother of Jesus. With that nod she tells me that she understands. That nod. The nod of Mary would have been so full of love and kinship. I love Mary, though certainly not in the Catholic sense. I do not worship her in the religious sense, but I do worship her in every other way. I know that Mary is dead, but this is no problem for her in the future; she will be raised from the dead. She was called according to a purpose, the same as me. I'm not saying our purposes are the same, but that we share the fact that God called us each to something. We have different purposes, but each purpose grows beneath the hand of God.

If neither of us had ever been called, then neither Mary nor I would be a part of this divine mix. We'd be

“also rans” right along with Simeon, Anna, Peter, John, Paul, Timothy, Martha, and other anonymous people God calls for His purposes. Instead, Mary and I both look up at the same time to see that we are gazing at one another, both gloriously used by the God of the universe at precisely the correct moments in history. Nothing can stop it. She dandles her Son; I play my drum. Today I sit at my computer and poke the keys, trying to make sense. The amazing thing is: I do make sense. This amazes me every day. It’s all I can do; it was all *she* could do. Like me, she was barely hanging on but still making sense. I love her for that. Some days, it is good enough.

I play my best for Him.

IN THE MIND OF GOD

“Whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand” (Romans 8:29).

The only way to get the truth of Paul’s gospel is to be “called according to the purpose.” Other than that, you’re out of it for the eon. I would have said, “you’re out of luck,” but luck has nothing to do with it. In another sense, luck has everything to do with it, as a



metaphor. Your choosing is not of yourself, so it may as well be luck. Your flesh is no different than anyone else’s flesh. God simply chose you ahead of time, before you were born, for membership into the most exclusive club in the universe: the body of Christ. Since it happened before you were born, it happened before you could have put anything into practice, whether good or bad.

Thus, you didn’t earn it. You didn’t earn it and you can’t screw yourself out of it. This is what is meant by, “whom He *foreknew*.”

It is not like He looked through His telescope of time and saw you being born, saw that you were going to be a great person, and said to Himself, “Now there’s a good fellow,” or, “There’s a good girl, I think I will choose *her*.” No. He wasn’t seeing anything through a magic telescope. I am tempted to say, “He chose you right out of the gate,”



but there was nothing like a gate yet existent. There was not even a humanity on the earth. God set you aside ahead of time, in His mind. In His mind only, He knew you. He also knew everyone else, but decided to call *you* according to His purpose, at the same time skipping over a billion other people who were also in His mind but whom He would work with more intimately later. It’s exactly like luck; maybe more like winning a lottery.

The following passage from Romans will help you understand how He foreknew you and designated you before you were born—

For, not as yet being born, nor putting into practice anything good or bad, that the purpose of God may be remaining as a choice, not out of acts, but of Him Who is calling, it was declared to her that “The greater shall be slaving for the inferior,” According as it is written, “Jacob I love, yet Esau I hate” (Romans 9:11-13).

God hated Esau only in relation to Jacob. “Hate” here is a relative term. Absolutely speaking, He loves Esau. But here we are comparing Esau to the apple of God’s eye: Jacob. But before Esau was even born, God passed him over and, in His mind, chose Jacob. This was all in the mind of God, I remind you. Neither Jacob nor Esau existed. This doesn’t mean that the choosing occupied a fog-filled fantasy in the thinking chambers of the Deity. No, it was real.

How then could anything Jacob and Esau did thousands of years later affect the choice that God decided upon beforehand? It couldn't. It would be like suggesting that an apple tree decides, once it grows up, to produce apples, and that's why God made it an apple tree—because of what the apple tree decided to do once it started growing. No thought could be stupider. Such a thought looks at time through an inverted kaleidoscope. This thought unfortunately aligns with the Christian way of thinking where behavior equals favor. “Behavior equals favor” is a delusion. The favor comes first. First God decides, then we become what He has already decided, and we act in accord with it. We don't decide something first, and then God reacts to what we have decided. This is stupider than the apple example. Such thinking makes God the clay and humanity the Potter. Behavior is the result of pre-designated favor. I'm talking about all behavior.

The reason Esau was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of soup was because God was, relatively speaking, already letting him go his own way. God actively ignored him; God was still Esau's God, He just manipulated his life in ways that caused him to become a vessel of dishonor and make stupid decisions because this is what God designated beforehand for him to be and to do. Jacob, on the other hand, appreciated the firstborn status because God's favor was already upon him. God had already decided these things eons before. I hope you see how unfair this is. (Everyone returns to God happy in the end, never forget that—Romans 11:36; Colossians 1:20. In the meantime, God uses who He wants for what He wants.)

God's choosings for the eon have nothing to do with fair, but rather with whomever it makes God happy to designate beforehand to be conformed to the image of His Son. In case I still haven't made this plain enough: the choosing of God comes first, *then* subsequent human actions, decisions and behaviors. If you put the cart before the horse here, you're going to fall into the trap of believing in Free Will and your horse is going to look ridiculous.

EMBRACE CLAYHOOD

“Whom He foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

We were chosen in God before we were born, to be the spiritual brethren of Jesus Christ. We are going to be “conformed to the image of His Son.” This word translated “conformed” is *summorphon* in the Greek and the

English elements are TOGETHER-FORMED. Note the active verb, “formed.” We are not being asked here to conform to the image of God's Son. That would be the Christian message. This is not a challenge, it's a promise. We are “to be conformed.” It's something that God has already decided to do and put on His schedule. This reminds me of another verse from Romans—

Has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor? (Romans 9:21).

I alluded to the Potter and the clay earlier. Your life is not your own; it is God's. He can do with you what He wants. Again note the active verb: “make.” It's Potter and clay. The Potter makes, and you become. This is such a simple yet at the same time despised and disbelieved truth. No one wants to be a lump of clay. I don't know why. I like it. It doesn't mean I don't live and act and cry and die and have fun; God has gifted me and all of us with a happy little bubble of ignorance where we don't know what the next moment holds. This doesn't mean God's not in control, but that we are blissfully ignorant of the details of the immediate future and, in



our ignorance, we live our lives and learn about stuff. God's hands upon me are ultimately comforting, even when I'm getting the goo squeezed out of me. I mean, at least it's God squeezing me. As for most other people, I notice that they want to be masters of their own fates. I understand this in the relative perspective (“I'm gonna make this happen”) because we think this way all the time. We have to. But the people I'm talking about believe that they are absolutely in charge of their lives. It's all an illusion, but I guess along with pots of coffee every day, it fuels them. It's a false fuel, though. It's called “the pride of life” and it goes away when reality eventu-



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ally strikes. Then is when the pride of life goes away. Eventually, your little '69 Volkswagen will run out of gas and sit shattered and dead on the side of the road. I say, let reality strike now. If God has chosen you ahead of time, then the reality will indeed strike. It ought to yield peaceable fruit.

LET IT BE

I would ask these silly people putt-putting around on the false fuel: "How is that 'master of your own fate' thing working out for you?" Again, it's not that we don't work and do and will and perform, but that any good thing that we do comes from God and is a direct result of His choosing. Don't stop there, though. Anything bad we do also comes from God and is also a direct result of His choosing. If you're chosen, you're chosen. In the belief department, more good stuff will happen than bad for a person who is designated beforehand for absurd glory, but the bad will come to balance things out and keep one humble. No matter what you do, you're saddled with this "having-been-chosen" thing. Once you're chosen, it's inescapable.

Part of me wants to say: You're chosen, get over it—but that seems rude. Do you think that there's any way that you could conform *yourself* to the image of God's

Son? Unfortunately, many Christian books have been written with instructions on how to do just this. People who have bought these books are either hanging from rafters by self-knotted ropes, or they're in pulpits and pews condemning others. If they were hung and done with it, at least they would be doing less damage to others that way. I'm not responsible for it. I'm doing everything I can to combat the error. I'm leaving every drop of my sweat on this battlefield of combating the error and if I die tomorrow, I will die content.

You're chosen ahead of time, so just accept it. Stop trying to wonder how it's fair. Stop feeling bad for everyone else. I'm not saying don't comfort them, I'm just saying don't fight the fact that they're not called. How can it possibly be your fault that God has not designated other people beforehand? It's no more your fault that they're not chosen than it is your credit that you have been. Were you around when God did all His foreknowing and designating? You weren't even a twinkle, anywhere. So don't worry. You didn't influence God one way or the other. How audacious of you to think so. God will come back for these other people. You know by now that God is the Savior of all humanity, especially of believers (1 Timothy 4:10). Right now we're talking about the "especially of believers" part at the end of that simple and easy-to-understand verse. Everyone is

coming in the end. For now, find peace inside your privilege and give up the guilt over all the other people God hasn't foreknown and designated beforehand. What could you have possibly done about it? You didn't even exist. Let God enjoy Himself. This is about Him, not you. Axe the arrogance. Put some vegetables and fruit in a blender and drink the result. Go to bed.

UNBELIEVERS OF ALL AGES

“Now whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also, and whom He calls, these He justifies also; now whom He justifies, these He glorifies also” (Romans 8:30).

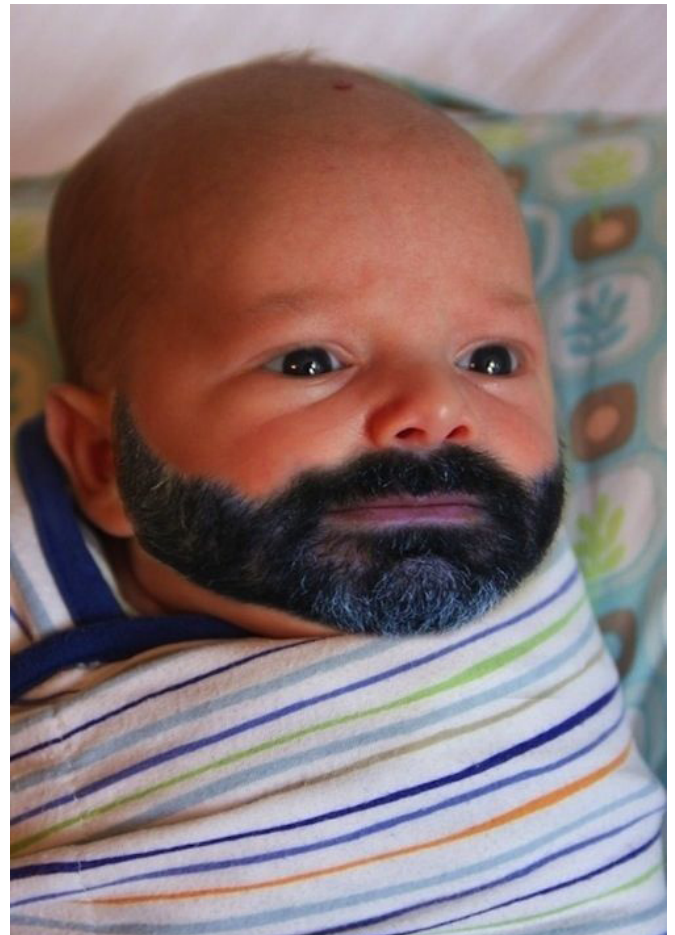
There is a divine order to this. It's like a row of dominoes here in Romans 8:30. First, God designates you beforehand. Next, He calls you. Stop right here at Domino #2. If you have been designated beforehand for the place of a Son, then at some point in your life you will be called. At some point in your life, God will make you aware of necessary truth belonging to membership in Christ's body. It has been suggested to me by various people at various times that there are people in this world who will die never knowing that they are in the body of Christ. “These people were simply ignorant members of the body of Christ,” I am told. This is impossible. Why? Because of this verse: “Whom He designates beforehand, these He calls also.” Please note that the verse does not say: “Whom He designates beforehand, some of these He never gets around to calling.”

People will ask me: “But Martin, what about babies?” The folks who ask this question don't believe the verse. The verse answers the question. If a person is designated beforehand, then that person will be called. Being called involves believing the truth. No one can believe truth apart from divine influence, we know. But how can a new baby accept any kind of call by believing any kind of truth? The kid can't even answer a telephone. If the baby dies (God forbid) before it can believe, then it simply was not called. This does not mean, of course, that the baby is not saved. It simply means that the baby is not a member of the body of Christ.

Very, very few people are members of the body of Christ. We've got to get this fact into our heads and stop wrestling with it. What part of “not many” don't we understand? What part of the word “few” don't we get? This call is a rare privilege. It is ridiculously rare. It is absurdly rare. It is about as rare as eight people in the world being

saved from a worldwide flood. We say we know how rare this calling is, then we wonder why more people aren't called. We must shout down our emotions and personal opinions that weigh in on these matters because our emotions are, for the most part, unintelligent. We must stop weeping, babbling, and blaring out error sourced in emotion. Rather, let us believe Scripture. The baby will enter life subsequent to the Great White Throne Judgment, as most people will. Were the baby designated beforehand for the special membership of Christ's body, then it would have grown up enough to have been called and then given the subsequent belief. This can happen very early. If it doesn't happen, then off goes the baby into eventual eternal bliss—slightly later—along with the 99.999999999% other descendants of Adam. What's not to like? Who will dare bitch about such eternal bliss entered into slightly later than we enter into it? Only *we* bitch about it because, if we were God, we wouldn't do it this way. But I think that we are much more emotional and weepy and shortsighted than God.

Many people don't like this truth because, to many people, emotions are more important than truth. If a





“In the things of God, one is as ignorant as the other.”

baby is cute, then it’s even harder to think that such a baby is not called. This is what I mean by the treachery of emotion. I have been told that God would never let anything bad happen, ever, to cute little girls in cute dresses and pigtails. If the girls are not cute and do not wear pigtails, then I guess they’re on their own. Is this the state of our spiritual maturity? I do not judge such things according to volatile emotion or outward appearance, and neither does God. This doesn’t mean that I don’t cry when a baby dies, or when anyone dies, or when a little girl takes her pigtails out. I do. But the truth marches on.

What is the difference between a baby who cannot believe and an adult who cannot believe? There is no difference. In the things of God, one is as ignorant as the other. Thus you can see that unbelief (that is, not being called) has nothing to do with age or mental capacity, but rather with not being designated beforehand. This is profound truth. Meditate upon it.

DOMINO #3

The next domino is: “Whom He calls, these He justifies also.” This is Domino #3. Being justified means that you come into the truth that, in God’s sight, you are righteous. We covered the topic of righteousness in Romans chapters three and four. The corollary truth is that being called entails knowledge. Being called means that you will come to a realization of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). One of the truths is justification, and it’s a big one. “Whom He calls, these He justifies.” I didn’t write this verse, God did. I’m simply commenting upon it. Don’t shoot the messenger. I’m simply

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telling you that the calling of God has to do with belief, which has to do with knowledge. Knowledge includes a knowledge of justification. (If you do shoot me because of the truth, you’ll be doing me a favor. If you must do me this favor, then please shoot to kill; I’m thanking you in advance.) Romans 3:22 says that this righteousness is “for all,” but it is currently only “*on* all who are believing.” The “on” has to do with believing it now; the “for all” refers to those who will believe it eventually.

DOMINO #4

The last domino to fall for we who have been designated beforehand is the only domino that is yet future. So far, we have been 1) designated beforehand, 2) called, and 3) justified. This is all in our past, and part of our present. Only one thing remains to occur in this divine series of marvelous events: glorification. This is our snatching away. It is our becoming immortal and meeting Christ and being taken into heaven to begin the happy work of reconciling the universe to God. It could happen any day now, any moment.

Every other domino has gone before. Therefore, the last domino must fall.

Did you hear that? I said that the last domino *must* fall. *Wait for it* —MZ



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