

## 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 you **are** able to explain it, a new-comer to the faith probably wouldn't **understand** what you're 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're **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're 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 image of His Son, so that he would 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. Now if it is by grace, then it is not the result of works - otherwise 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. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of **his will**.”* We have been **adopted** as God’s children. And as God’s children, we are Christ’s **brothers**, because 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 so that they may see my glory - the glory you gave me because you loved me **before the world’s foundation**.”* 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**. And 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 saved us and called us with a holy calling - **not** because of **our** works, 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’s also heard with our **heart**. And by God’s grace alone, that calling is not **rejected** by us, but rather it is **received**. God changed our hearts and **turned us around**. Peter put it this way, *“You were like sheep **going astray**, but you are now **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’s 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, because 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 Jesus.

During this **Walk Through The Christian's Life**, we've seen how gracious and merciful our Heavenly Father is to us. We've 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** - because 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'm 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 to simply leave the matter in **God's** hands. He wrote, "*We know that **all things** work together for the **good** of those who **love God**, for those who are **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 **all** things work together for our **good**, he means **everything** - hardships, trials, even governmental **restrictions** and potentially deadly **viruses**. 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** when it is happening, but **painful**, yet later it yields a peaceful harvest of **righteousness** 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 sanctifying work of the **Spirit** and through **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 is 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.