

## Guided Unto Glory #3: How God Brings Sons to Glory

The first two “Guided Unto Glory” lessons were from Ps. 73:24 (“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”). I had thought the study was finished, but this lesson seems to touch the same topic.

God had a perfect and eternal plan, even before creating man, to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). This plan accounted for the Fall, and so the necessity of our redemption. He was not “taken by surprise” at the Fall, and so our redemption was not some sort of “plan B”. This wonderful, divine plan is described in Rom. 8.

Rom. 8:28-30 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

It is hard to know what to call these five things (foreordination, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification) – they are described sequentially like links in a chain, but they are not really separate. They are distinct but inter-related steps in a progression, and have all existed concurrently in the mind of God for ever. The words “steps” or “links” can be used but seem inadequate.

### Foreknowledge

In its most general sense, foreknowledge is God’s seeing and knowing everything that will take place before it happens. But in regards to our salvation, it describes how he perfectly knows his people, not just now but even before we were created. He foreknew us because it was in his infinite and perfect mind to create us. To “know” is how the Bible describes the union of a man and woman in marriage, and thus describes the most intimate kind of knowledge. He doesn’t just know the facts of our existence, but it was his intention to “know” a people, and for them to know him. The Bible even talks about this relationship between God and man in terms of marriage.

Isa. 54:5 – “For thy Maker is thine husband ...”

Jer. 3:14 – “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you ...”

Hos. 2:19 – “And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.”

Mt. 22:1-14 – The parable of the wedding feast, of the king who made a marriage for his son.

Mt. 25:1-13 – The parable of the ten virgins, waiting to meet the bridegroom

2 Cor. 11:2 – “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Rev. 19:6-9 – The marriage supper of the Lamb

So God desires to be in a loving relationship of fellowship with his people, and he uses the figure of marriage to describe it, because that is the closest knowledge we experience in this world. He not only wants to know us, but for us to know him. Not just in the mental knowledge of studying the Bible to learn about him, but to have a knowledge of him that is akin to marriage.

But this foreknowledge is not one of mere potentialities. He did not foreknow that he would save “some people”, when the time came - his foreknowledge was of specific people. Because of this, he took measures to ensure the success of that intent.

### Predestination

Many people find the concept of predestination to be frightening, in the misconception that it is merely fatalism, or that it makes men mere robots, and robs them of their “free will”. But it is inescapable that the Bible clearly uses the term predestination, so our place is not to debate its reality, but to understand what is meant by it (as much as lies in our finite abilities, and within the limits of what has been revealed in scripture).

Besides the word being used in our main verses in Rom. 8, it is also in Ephesians.

Eph. 1:3-7 – “... who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, ...”

Eph. 1:11-12 – “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

Several other places in the Bible refer to this same decisive activity of God, as foreordination, or to ordain beforehand what comes to pass. In many places the Bible says that something did or did not happen because it was God’s will that something else would happen. Our purpose here is not to get into an exhaustive study of predestination, but simply to acknowledge that God somehow takes an active hand in ordaining, or predestinating, what he has foreknown, especially in the matter of the redemption of those people.

It is intended to be a great comfort and strength to us, to know that we are not mere creatures of chance, but that “all things are working together for our good”. We also see that this predestination is not capricious or meaningless, but it has purpose - to be conformed to the image of his Son, that we should be holy and without blame before him, becoming the adopted sons of God, living to the praise of the glory of his grace.

## Calling

The next “step” is his calling of those whom he foreknew. This is also referred to as a choosing, or an election. See Eph. 1:4 above. Very often the Bible refers to the saints as “the elect of God”. To know that God has chosen us should certainly not be a matter of pride, because his choice had nothing to do with our merit, or goodness. His choice was before we existed. It also was not a matter of him “knowing who would believe”, and then choosing them. In reality that would be us choosing him, and then him merely ratifying our choice. It would also be a form of salvation by works. In fact we have no idea at all why he chose us individually but that it was “according to the good pleasure of his will.” We can only thank and praise him, and endeavor to “make our calling and election sure.”

Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen”. This shows a distinction between a general call and an effectual call. A general call goes out to all who hear the gospel, telling them that God commands all men everywhere to repent. But the effectual call is what goes to God’s elect, his chosen, whereby they not only hear the gospel, but respond. That effectual call is given to those whom the Father gives to the Son. Jn. 6:37 – “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ...”, and Jn. 6:44 – “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (also verse 65)

How do we respond to that call? By believing on him (Jn. 6:40 and 1:12) we become sons of God and receive eternal life. But how can we be sure? By Jesus’ own promise – Jn. 6:37 – “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” If you come and believe, it is his promise to save!

## Justification

As God’s ultimate purpose is to “bring many sons to glory”, there is the problem of sin. To do that, God would need to deliver his chosen from sin, reconcile them to himself, and bring them into a position of adopted sonship. All men have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The only way we could be seen as righteous before a holy God is through the death of his Son as a holy, sacrificial substitute, dying in our place. His resurrection is the evidence that that sacrifice has been accepted of God, and so those who believe on Christ have “justification”.

Rom. 3:19-28 shows that justification is impossible by “the deeds of the law”. “Trying to be good” is not good enough, if for no other reason than even perfect obedience in the future cannot erase existing guilt.

What is included in this justification? Forgiveness, cleansing, reconciliation, adoption, confidence in prayer, and peace. Rom. 5:1 – “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## Glorification

Rom. 8:29-30 presents these five things (foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification) almost like links in a chain, in a sequential progression. We tend to think of this in terms of past, present, and future. Foreknowledge and predestination are in the past, calling and justification are in the present but “applied” in the present, and glorification is future. But God is eternal, and they are all the same to him – he lives in an eternal

“now”. All five of these “links” existed in God’s mind from eternity past, and are in continuance throughout the ages. Perhaps that is why it says “whom he justified, them he also glorified”, as if the glorification is past. It is not past in our sense of time, but in God’s eyes, it is done. God sees it as complete, because he works all things according to the good pleasure of his will, and nothing can alter or hinder it.

How will we be glorified? Mt. 13:43 (in the parable of the wheat and the tares) says “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” This refers to the end of the age after the final judgment. But apparently there is glory for the departed saints even now, as when Moses and Elijah appeared on the mount of transfiguration, it says they “appeared in glory”.

When Jesus appeared to John in Rev. 1, it says “his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength”, with head and hair white like snow, eyes like a flame of fire, feet like brass shining in a fire, and a voice like the sound of many waters. But look at 1 Jn. 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Our glory will not equal his, but it will be of the same type. It will really be his glory shining in and through us.

When will this glorification happen, or become visible? At the resurrection certainly, and probably even beforehand, between death and resurrection - Phl. 3:20-21 – “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Our glory will also be manifested when we return in triumph with Christ at the end of the age. Col. 3:4 – “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Also Rev. 19:11-14.

## **Application**

In all the troubles of this life, and the griefs and turmoils, we should remember that it is the great God who has determined to save us, that he foreknew and predestinated us, gave us a calling that effectually convinced us to respond to the gospel, that he justified us in Christ, and that in his eyes we are glorified in an eternal salvation and position as his adopted sons. We should remember that this life is short and that there will soon come a time when we will see him and bow before him in glory. Then it will be worth it all.

Rom. 8:31-39

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**Praise God for his unspeakable gift!**

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