

Together for Good – part 2

I enjoy the poster that says ‘*Plan Ahead,*’ but the way the letters are placed there isn’t room enough to fit the last letter. Plan Ahea...d

One of the most valuable individuals in any setting – work, school, business...

Is the one who anticipates what’s coming and plans ahead for it.

That’s what God has done for us. He anticipates everything about you – your birth, your life and circumstances, even your eternal future – all in His loving care.

God has planned ahead for you.

We looked at trials and how God ***works all things together for good*** in our lives.

We saw four sources of trials: Trials of life, Trials of discipline, Trials of prevention, and the Trials of education.

Then we saw that the end product of trials is being conformed to Christ’s image.

“And we know that God causes **all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes. For those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also **called**; and these whom He called, He also **justified**; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**. (Rom. 8:28-30)

These verses display the full **plan of salvation from God’s perspective:**

In eternity past God knew us; he planned for our salvation and destined us to become like Christ. Though we experience many trials we know that God causes them all to work together for our good.

To work together – sunergeo – synergism, the working together of various elements to produce an effect greater than, and often completely different from the sum of each element acting separately.

So how should we respond to the many trials that we face, knowing God’s part is to make them good?

Romans 5 addresses this,

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in the hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven

character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Romans 5:1-5)

Our part: exalt in our tribulations with the knowledge of their purpose.

God's part: The Holy Spirit uses them to flood us with love.

Paul's words to Timothy have a similar tone,

“But the goal of our instruction is **love** from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5)

I. **Salvation from God's perspective – the doctrine of Grace**

Five key concepts are mentioned,

Foreknew

Predestined

Called

Justified

Glorified

These have been called the five links of the golden chain.

Grace means that something is all of God – or what God has done.

God's ultimate intention for us began long before we were born.

MacArthur writes,

In these two verses Paul reveals the unbroken pattern of God's sovereign redemption, from His eternal foreknowledge of a believer's salvation to its ultimate completion in glorification.¹

The first link mentioned is '*foreknowledge*'.

1. Foreknowledge: not simply knowledge beforehand but has more to do with His foreordination. He doesn't see faith in advance; He ordains faith in advance. Someone has described this term as simply, “God knows”.

It is the noun-form of the verb, '*foreknew*,' (proginosko) – carries the idea of special intimacy and is often used of a love relationship --**translated:** “*chosen*.”

“You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth.”
(Amos 3:2).

¹ MacArthur, p. 489.

God knew Israel in the unique sense of having predetermined that she would be His chosen people. Our salvation also originated with God.

“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit and that your fruit would remain.”

(Jn. 15:16).

Jesus said,

“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him”

(Jn. 6:44).

John records that our new birth is not a result of

“...blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

(John 1:13)

Paul writes,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of your selves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9)

On this side of heaven, the sign above the gate it says, “*Whosoever will, come.*”

On the other side the sign reads, “*Chosen before the foundation of the world.*”

2. Predestined: proorizo –

“to mark out, appoint and determine beforehand”

“The Lord has predetermined the destiny of every person who will believe in Him. Just as Jesus was crucified “by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23), so God also has predestined every believer to salvation through the means of that atoning sacrifice.”²

Paul writes,

“[God] **chose us in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love **He predestined us** to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph. 1:4-5)

Predestination means that their destiny is to be made like Jesus Christ.

I would rather fail in a cause that is destined to succeed,

² MacArthur, p. 497.

Than succeed in a cause that is destined to fail!

Our job is not to manage our own destiny; it is to cooperated with God's plan.

3. Called – The *called* are those who the Holy Spirit has brought to saving faith in Christ. There is an inward and outward calling. The outward call is when the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. The inward call is when the Holy Spirit has already called that person to saving faith.

"The other kind of call is internal, specific and effectual. That is, it not only issues the invitation, it also provides the ability or willingness to respond positively. It is God's drawing to himself or bringing to spiritual life the one who without that call would remain spiritually dead and far from Him."³

Paul states this,

"...[God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

Dr. Boice's Example: Jesus calling of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who had died four days before and laid in the grave.

Picture of every human being in his natural state

Dead in body and soul, bound with graveclothes,
lying in a tomb, sealed with some great stone.

Let's call to him, "Lazarus, Lazarus. Come forth, Lazarus.

We want you back. We miss you. If you will just get up out of that tomb and return to us, you'll find that we are all anxious to have you back. No one here is going to put any obstructions in your way."

What? Won't Lazarus come? Doesn't he want to be with us?

The problem is that Lazarus does not have the ability to come back. The call is given, but he cannot come.

But now let Jesus come and call Him: "Lazarus, come forth!"

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans, Vol. 2., The Reign of Grace: Romans 5-8*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), p. 913.

Jesus' calling is effective. The Creator, who spoke all things into being from nothing, is calling life out of death, and His call is heard. Lazarus, though he has been dead four days, hears Jesus and obeys his Master's voice.⁴

4. *Justified* – being made right with God

Justification: a judicial act in which God declares sinful people to be in right standing before Him (based on Jesus sacrifice on the cross);

and then, their sins having been paid for, He imputes the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ to their account.

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus...” (Rom. 3:23-24).

5. *Glorified* – the ultimate state of glorification, in which our bodies are redeemed from this creation's corruption.

Our great hope is expressed:

“The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now... even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:22-23).

Why would this future event be spoken of in the past tense?

Dr. Boice beautifully answers this,

“When Paul mentions glorification, he refers to it in the past tense (“Glorified”) rather than in the future (“will glorify”) or future passive tense (“will be glorified”), which is what we might have expected him to have done. Why is this? The only possible but also obvious reason is that he is think of this final step in our salvation as being so certain that it is possible to refer to is as having already happened. And, of course, he does this deliberately to assure us that this is exactly what will happen.”⁵

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our

⁴ Boice, p. 915.

⁵ Boice, p. 916.

humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Phil. 3:20-21).

**Knowing that God works all our trials together for our good,
and that our salvation has been planned for from eternity past
and that we have a sure hope for our eternal future,
...Paul then asks:**

“What shall we say to these things?
If God is for us, who is against us?”⁶

Our victory is sure!

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
(v. 35)

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” ((v. 37)

Overwhelmingly conquer – *hupernikao* – compound verb that literally means to hyper-conquer, to over-conquer; to conquer, as it were, with success to spare.

How shall we respond to the trials we face?

In 1659, a Puritan writer wrote,

“God, who is infinite in wisdom and matchless in goodness, hath ordered our troubles, yea, many troubles to come trooping in upon us on every side. As our mercies, so our crosses seldom come single; they usually come treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over but another comes. It’s mercy that every affliction is not an execution, every correction not a damnation. The more the afflictions, the more the heart is raised heavenward.”⁷

⁶ See Rom. 8:31-39 for the rest of the questions.

⁷ Thomas Brooks, *The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod*.