

Having observed the close relationship between the words “*named*” and “*called*,” let’s address in more detail the relationship between “*called*” and “*chosen*.” We have confirmed that New Testament believers are “*called*” to an office (position) once they are placed in Christ (after repenting and believing while depraved). Jesus was even called to the office of Messiah. New Testament believers are also “*chosen*” as a result of being placed in the Father’s “*chosen one*” (Isaiah 42:1), Jesus Christ (after repenting and believing while depraved), Who was “*chosen*” to office—the office of Messiah. 2Peter 1:10 makes use of the terms “*calling*” and “*choosing*” as follows:

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling [2821] and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2Peter 1:10)

You received a “*calling*” (2Peter 1:10) in conjunction with God “*choosing you*” (2Peter 1:10) once you were placed in the “*chosen one*” (Isaiah 42:1), Jesus Christ—after repenting and believing while depraved.

The last phrase of Romans 8:28 (“*who are called according to His purpose*”) provides input that will assist us greatly when we study “*predestined*” in Romans 8:29-30. It contains the words, “*according to*,” which are used 790 times in the New American Standard Bible, 725 in the King James, and on occasion are found more than once in some verses. Interestingly, whatever follows the words “*according to*” must precede (in time) what is addressed prior to the words, “*according to*.” Consequently:

If **A** is according to **B**

Then **B** precedes **A**

This principle applies in every instance where “*according to*” is used in the Scriptures. If you consult each reference, you will be amazed at the consistency of God’s Word. Some examples are listed below. For the purpose of emphasis, the words “*according to*” are underlined in each of the subsequent passages, with commentary following each verse.

Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did. (Genesis 6:22)

What “*God...commanded*” preceded Noah’s obedience.

To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. (Genesis 41:12)

The “*dream*” existed before the interpretation.

And the LORD did according to the word of Moses, (Exodus 8:13)

Moses’ words were spoken before the Lord responded (“*did*”).

Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan...(Exodus 26:30)

The “*plan*” for the tabernacle existed before “*the tabernacle*” was erected.

...to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

God’s “*purpose*,” which is “*eternal*” (Ephesians 3:11), precedes the New Testament believer’s calling. As has been verified, “*called*” (Romans 8:28) points to the special position or office church saints receive once they are placed in Christ—after having exercised repentance and faith while depraved.

The remarkable nature of “*according to*” is addressed in greater depth in our book, *God’s Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge - Predestination*. Shortly, we will take these powerful words (“*according to*”) and apply them to “*foreknew*” and “*predestined*” in Romans 8:29. The results will provide a clear (and proper) definition of these highly debated terms. Before focusing on Romans 8:29, however, we must allow Greek grammar to put the finishing touches on Romans 8:28:

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 purpose.
(Romans 8:28)

“*We know*” is a perfect, active, indicative verb—pointing to past action, completed action, action that is never repeated. Thus, Paul confirms that his readers knew something they would never forget—“*that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*” Intriguingly, “*work together*,” “*who love*,” and “*who are called*” carry the present tense—which adds incredible flavor to this Scripture.

Due to the implementation of the present tense in “*who are called*,” we can know that Paul is addressing the believers of his day only. After all, a New Testament believer’s call to office only lasts so long as he remains on the earth. This truth is verified when Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-13, and 1Corinthians 12:28 are coupled with 1Corinthians 13:1-13.

And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.
(Romans 12:6-8)

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son

of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. (1Corinthians 12:28)

God has gifted New Testament believers with specific spiritual gifts. Some of these gifted individuals, such as “*prophets*,” “*evangelists*,” “*pastors and teachers*,” are used of God to equip and “*mature*” the “*body of Christ*”—“*until*” believers “*attain...to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*” However, once New Testament believers enter heaven, no need exists for such gifts to be exercised because once church saints eject out of their earthly bodies, they suddenly see Jesus “*face to face*” and are taught by Jesus Himself:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. (1Corinthians 13:8-12)

The spiritual gifts granted to New Testament saints are “*done away*” (1Corinthians 13:8), or removed, once they enter heaven. Why would a believer with the gift of “*prophecy*” need to prophesy while in the Lord’s presence—the Source of all prophecy? The same principle applies to “*evangelists*” (Ephesians 4:11), for evangelism will become obsolete due to all the inhabitants of heaven being believers. Hence, we function in our special calling (office, position) only so long as we live in earthly bodies. Thus the phrase, “*who are called*” (Romans 8:28), being in the present tense, applies in the specific sense to the New Testament believers (on earth) in Paul’s day. This truth plays a major role in determining the context of Romans 8:29-30 (which will be studied shortly), so keep it readily accessible. It also supplies insight into Revelation 17:14:

“These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called [2822] and chosen and faithful.” (Revelation 17:14)

The “*called and chosen and faithful*” in this passage are New Testament believers who return with Christ at His Second Coming. They are described as “*called*” due to having received a special calling (position) when placed in Christ (subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved)—a position they relinquished at the point of physical death. Thus, “*called*” is an adjective—describing those previously “*called*” to office at the point of justification—an office they will no longer hold. The present tense would be

implemented in Revelation 17:14 should they remain “called.” Yet, it is nowhere to be found. They are described as “chosen” due to having been placed in the “chosen” one, Jesus Himself, after repenting and believing while depraved.

Let’s observe how these wonderful realities regarding the phrase, “who are called” (Romans 8:28), fit the whole of Romans 8:28:

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 purpose.
(Romans 8:28)

Paul is communicating “that God causes” (present tense action on God’s part—the context of which is action that occurred in Paul’s day) “all things to work together for good to those who love God” (“who love God” is also in the present tense—pointing to the inhabitants of earth who loved God when this epistle was written). This context is proper due to the phrase, “to those who are called,” being in the present tense—pointing to those living on earth in Paul’s day who were “called” to office. Thus, they were “called according to His purpose” in conjunction with being placed in Christ after repenting and believing while depraved. None of the believers of Paul’s day serve in their previous areas of calling due to presently seeing Jesus “face to face” (1Corinthians 13:12). Also, believers in heaven need not be encouraged to view “all things” as working “together for good” (Romans 8:28)! Why should they when adversity is a thing of the past? This truth confirms that the general context of Romans 8:28 relates to all New Testament believers so long as they live on the earth, the specific context being believers living on the earth in Paul’s day?

Conclusion: The specific context of Paul’s words in Romans 8:28 applies to believers on the earth when this epistle was penned—who loved God and were “called” to a special position (office) within the body of Christ once they were placed in Christ—after repenting and believing while depraved. Upon physical death their calling ended, being no longer necessary in an environment filled with mature followers of Jesus Christ and void of the unsaved. No need for their calling (to office) remains, for Jesus is present to meet their every need. When coupled with the full counsel of God’s Word, Romans 8:28 also confirms that we, presently functioning in the area of our calling, will do so only so long as we live in our physical bodies.

Some scholars might argue that Romans 11:29 disproves our findings:

for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)

The term, “irrevocable,” must be properly understood or confusion results. Paul is not teaching that the “calling” (to office) we received at the point of justification remains forever. In fact, the context of Romans 11:29 points to the nation of Israel’s “calling” to office—a “calling” to take the gospel to the Gentiles—a “calling” she has yet to fulfill. However, she remains called and will continue to be called until she fulfills her “calling” prior to Jesus’ Second Coming—by taking the gospel to the world (Matthew 24:14) through the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of Revelation 7. She will not function in this “calling” forever, for no unsaved Gentiles will inhabit the eternal order of Revelation 21-

22—ushered in after the one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. Hence, “irrevocable” (Romans 11:29) is interpreted “*without repentance*” in the King James:

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Romans 11:29 KJV)

The ASV renders the verse:

For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of. (Romans 11:29 ASV)

This rendering verifies that God will never repent of (change His mind regarding) His “*calling*” on the nation of Israel to take the gospel to the Gentiles—although Israel will eventually cease functioning in this “*calling*” during the eternal order (an environment void of any unsaved Gentiles). Neither will He renege (default) on His promises (or covenants) given to the physical Jewish nation. Numbers 23:19 validates this truth:

“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19)

What God says, God will do. He can be trusted.

This truth regarding the New Testament believer’s “*calling*” to office will add tremendous flavor to Romans 8:30. In fact, it allows Romans 8:29-30 to be interpreted free of contradiction. It also validates the free-will of man.

God’s Foreknowledge

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (Romans 8:29)

God knows, and has always known, everything that will transpire from eternity past through eternity future. God has given man a free will to choose as he pleases, but God knows beforehand what those choices will be (Psalm 139:1-4). Thus, God possesses foreknowledge.

We must exercise caution here, for some individuals perceive Romans 8:29 as teaching that God determines who will or will not be saved—that God sealed our destiny before we were born. They believe that a person must be “*predestined*” (and elected) to salvation from eternity past if he is to be saved at some point after physical birth. Is this mindset proper, or is Paul communicating something totally different?

God possesses foreknowledge. He knows, and has always known, everything that has occurred, is occurring, or will occur from eternity past through eternity future. In fact, all that transpires from eternity past through eternity future is constantly before Him. Consequently, God is not required to cause all things to know all things, as some

theologians have incorrectly assumed. Such inappropriate assumptions force one to redefine “*foreknew*” (Romans 8:29) as “foreordained” or “predestined,” which is totally unfair to the text.

Those who view God as predetermining man’s destiny before man is born (by means of an eternal decree—with the depraved incapable of repenting and exercising faith), must view foreknowledge as equal to foreordination and predestination. This modification is an attempt to extinguish the proper meaning of foreknowledge. So long as “foreknowledge” remains “foreknowledge” (to know beforehand in the sense of foreseeing), man can possess a free will and choose to repent and believe while depraved. Reformed Theology (extreme and hyper-Calvinism) cannot withstand such an arrangement, for according to their view the depraved are spiritual corpses incapable of choosing Christ. Hence, God (according to their view) must cause all things, even determine man’s destiny, if He is to remain sovereign. Should such thinking be true, God would be the cause of Adam’s sin (the Author of sin), the reason Hitler attempted to exterminate the Jews, the instigator of terrorism, the cause of your next sin—and Satan, instead of being God’s enemy, would be His faithful ally, performing His will. Scripture repudiates not only the Reformed view, but moderate Calvinism and Arminianism as well. (Consult the Reference Section, Diagrams 13-15, for more information regarding Arminianism and the different branches of Calvinism, including Reformed Theology.)

The Scriptural View of Foreknowledge

The following should be read more than once (maybe several times) for proper understanding. Don’t become discouraged your first time through. Also, the same truth is stated in a variety of ways. Repetition can be a wonderful tool when properly implemented.

Our search will begin by determining what the Scriptures teach regarding God’s purposes (plans), decrees, and works. These subjects, defined correctly, are vital because they reveal the proper definition of foreknowledge.

We will start by confirming that God is “*eternal*” (note that words are underlined for emphasis):

“The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He drove out the enemy from before you, and said, ‘Destroy!’ (Deuteronomy 33:27)

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; (Romans 16:26)

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1Timothy 1:17)

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14)

Based on Acts 15:18, God has always (eternally) known His “works.”

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15:18 KJV).

Known to God from eternity are all His works. (Acts 15:18 NKJV).

God’s “works” are the natural byproduct of His purposes (plans). If no purpose (plan) exists, no work can occur. Because God’s purposes (plans) are “eternal” (Ephesians 3:11; 2Timothy 1:9), He has always known them; they have always existed within His heart.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Ephesians 3:11 NASB)

who 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 NASB)

Scripture confirms that an eternally known work requires an eternally known “purpose” or plan. Because the same Greek word used for “eternal” in Ephesians 3:11 is used to describe the eternal King of the universe in 1Timothy 1:17, we can know that God’s purposes are eternal as well.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1Timothy 1:17 KJV)

This truth explains Paul’s use of the words, “eternal purpose,” in Ephesians 3:11. According to Job 22:28 and Daniel 11:36b, the function of a “decree” is to establish the certainty of the fulfillment of a purpose or plan.

“You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; ... (Job 22:28 NASB)

“Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. (Daniel 11:36 NASB)

If no “decree” exists, the fulfillment of a purpose or plan is unattainable.

God's purposes are "eternal" (Ephesians 3:11; 2Timothy 1:9) because they have always existed within His heart. In addition, His decrees, which guarantee the certainty of the fulfillment of His purposes, are also "eternal," as confirmed by Jeremiah 5:22.

'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD. Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, an eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. (Jeremiah 5:22 NASB)

Isaiah 63:16 is in agreement:

Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. (Isaiah 63:16 KJV)

Because God is both eternal and unchanging (and much, much more), His "name" remains the same from eternity past through eternity future. Thus, His "name" is eternal. Hence, the words "from everlasting" (Isaiah 63:16) confirm that His name has no beginning. His decrees are also eternal, for the identical Hebrew word from which we get "from everlasting" (Isaiah 63:16) is rendered "eternal" Jeremiah 5:22.

Applying this input to Romans 8:29 greatly impacts how this passage is to be perceived.

According to Romans 8:29, God's foreknowledge must precede that moment when a person is predestined:

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (Romans 8:29)