

The Contextual View

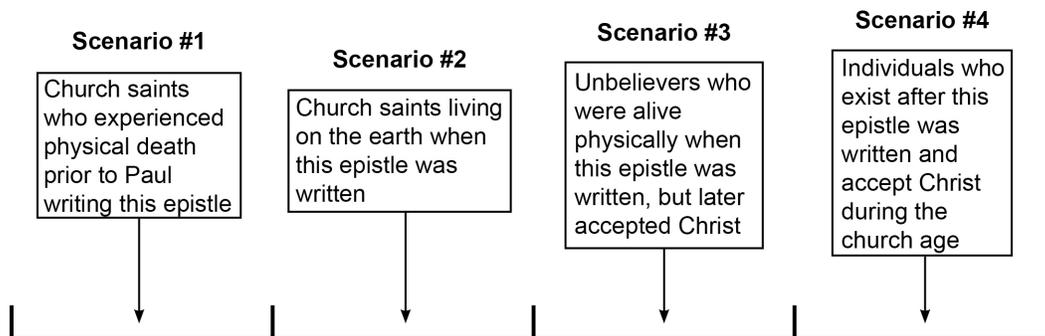
Let's reconsider our findings in regard to "called" (Romans 8:28) and "whom," "whom," "whom," and "whom" (Romans 8:29-30).

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. 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; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)

The specific context of these passages relates to believers living on the earth when this epistle was written (Scenario #2 in the diagram presented previously titled "Four Scenarios that Provide Context to Romans 8:28-30"). The significance of this discovery is impossible to overemphasize, for it holds the key to a proper view of this highly debated segment of God's infallible Word. New Testament believers are "called" (Romans 8:28) to office only so long as they live on the earth—"called" (Romans 8:28) being in the present tense, placing the specific context squarely upon believers inhabiting the earth when this God-inspired letter was generated. Thus, the "whom," "whom," "whom," and "whom" of Romans 8:29-30 must point to this same group of believers—saints living at that particular time who had been "predestined," "called," "justified," and "glorified" the moment they repented and believed while depraved. This view, therefore, allows the past tense (aorist tense) associated with "predestined," "called," "justified," and "glorified" to apply void of inconsistency—for the recipients of this epistle were already believers when this epistle was written.

Considering all of this wonderful truth, the specific context of "foreknew" of Romans 8:29 relates to this same group of saints. Don't misunderstand. God's foreknowledge is eternal and all-inclusive, for He foreknows all things without being required to cause all things. Yet Paul, in these passages, is emphasizing His foreknowledge of a particular group of believers—the New Testament believers on the earth when this epistle was written (remember that the "whom" of "for whom He foreknew" of Romans 8:29 also references this particular group of believers). These facts add incredible insight to our study, for they prove that only one of the four previously addressed scenarios applies. All four scenarios are again listed for convenience:

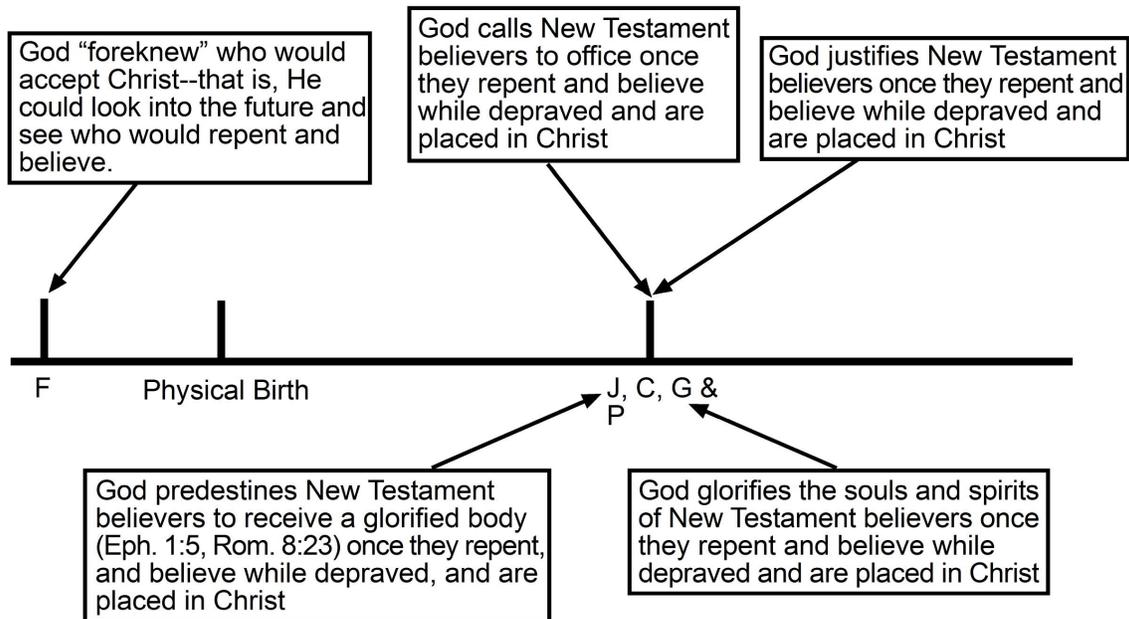
Four Possible Groups to Whom Paul Was Referring in Romans 8:29-30



Paul was led to implement the particular tenses utilized in these passages because he was addressing Scenario #2—“Church saints living on the earth when this epistle was written.” The present tense “called” (Romans 8:28) proves that Scenario #1 does not apply, for these New Testament saints no longer serve in the office to which they were previously “called.” They were (and are) basking in the presence of God in heaven (2Corinthians 5:8). Neither does Scenario #3 fit the specific context, for these unbelievers would have been “predestined,” “called,” “justified,” and “glorified” prior to repenting and believing had Paul been referencing them. Should Scenario #4 fit the specific context, these individuals would be “predestined,” “called,” “justified,” and “glorified” when they arrive on the earth—a total impossibility. Thus, Paul narrows the specific context of “foreknew” (Romans 8:29) to believers dwelling on the earth when this epistle was written.

Based on these amazing facts, the P (“predestined”), C (“called”), J (“justified”), and G (“glorified”) of Romans 8:30 can be associated with a particular point on the timeline. New Testament believers are “predestined,” “called,” and “glorified” the instant they are “justified.” This truth is displayed in graphic form below:

Romans 8:29-30 The Contextual View



This "Contextual View" of Romans 8:29-30 allows God's foreknowledge to have preceded that moment when the recipients of this epistle (and all other believers on the earth at that time) repented and believed while depraved. Once they repented and believed, they were "*predestined*" (to receive a glorified body), "*called*" (to office), "*justified*" (made not guilty, righteous), and "*glorified*" (in soul and spirit) through the Spirit placing them in Christ—allowing the past tense in each case to apply due to their having been made into all of these wonderful things prior to receiving this epistle. The exactness of the Scriptures is astounding!

The next portion of the study will verify how a correct view of the identity of the New Testament believer (what God makes New Testament believers into the moment they repent and believe while depraved) supplies additional insight into these highly debated and often misinterpreted passages. In this breathtaking journey we will allow God's Word to make the profound simple.

Arminianism and all forms of Calvinism perceive Romans 8:29-30 as teaching that believers are predestined and elected to salvation before they are born (from eternity past by means of an eternal decree). Such an arrangement, however, would allow Romans 8:29-30 to teach that the "*predestined*" of Arminianism and Calvinism who are not yet in existence are presently "*called*," "*justified*," and "*glorified*"—since "*predestined*," "*called*," "*justified*," and "*glorified*" are all in the past tense. Stated differently, had future believers been "*predestined*" to salvation from eternity past, they would presently be "*called*," "*justified*," and "*glorified*." This arrangement, however, would cause them to be "*justified*" and "*glorified*" prior to existing as well as "*justified*" and "*glorified*" at physical birth. Therefore, Ephesians 2:3 discredits both Arminianism and all forms of

Calvinism (including Reformed Theology), since all persons arrive on the earth “*children of wrath*.”

In an attempt to circumvent the inconsistencies surrounding their view of foreknowledge and predestination, Reformed Theology (extreme and hyper-Calvinism) teaches that Paul (by inserting the past action “*glorified*” in Romans 8:29-30) is actually stressing the certainty of a future event. In fact, they perceive Romans 8:29-30 as providing the chronological order of events experienced by the elect in regard to salvation (the “golden chain” that cannot be broken according to their interpretation). Yet, the truths associated with the identity of the New Testament believer discredit their reasoning. This fact is confirmed below by first listing the Reformed view and presenting a rebuttal.

The Reformed View of Romans 8:29-30

God can’t foreknow what He has not caused. Therefore, “*foreknew*” (Romans 8:29) can be redefined as “foreordained” or “predestined.”

God predestines the elect to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Thus, all of the elect were “*predestined*” (Romans 8:29-30) to be saved.

When the time arrives for the elect to be saved, they are “*called*” (Romans 8:30) by God through irresistible grace. God then spiritually regenerates them and gives them the gifts of repentance and faith. This repentance and faith become the possession of the elect.

The elect exercise the repentance and faith supplied by God and they are “*justified*” (Romans 8:30).

Once the elect are released from their earthly bodies (at physical death), they are “*glorified*” (Romans 8:30). Although this “event” transpires in the future for the elect living on the earth, the certainty of the action allows the Scriptures to perceive it as having already occurred.

Are any of these five conclusions valid? Let’s allow God’s Word to answer this question by examining the five—one at a time.

The Scriptural Rebuttal to the Reformed View of Romans 8:29-30

The Reformed view: God can’t foreknow what He has not caused. Therefore, “*foreknew*” (Romans 8:29) can be redefined as “foreordained” or “predestined.”

Rebuttal: Reformed Theology’s unhealthy view of God’s sovereignty (where His sovereignty is elevated above all His wonderful attributes, including His love) can’t allow

God to foreknow what He does not cause. Hence, Reformed theologians perceive God as causing all things, including man's destiny. Thus, they redefine "*foreknew*" (Romans 8:29) as "foreordained" or "predestined."

Words can't be redefined in an attempt to uphold a contradictory presupposition. In fact, should this redefinition of terms be valid, Romans 8:29 would read: "*For whom he predestined he also predestined.*" This arrangement of terms would not only be redundant but totally nonsensical. Paul would never yield to redundancy and senseless verbiage while addressing such vital matters.

The specific context of "*foreknew*" in Romans 8:29 was proven earlier to point to God's foreknowledge (pre-knowledge) of the believers inhabiting the earth when this epistle was written. Therefore, the aorist tense (past tense) "*foreknew*" applies void of contradiction, for the recipients of this epistle were not only believers, but were "foreknown" by God prior to receiving Paul's words—thus "*foreknew*" is in the aorist tense (past tense). For God to foreknow these believers in the sense of knowing their thoughts, deeds, and more, prior to their being saved (the full counsel, contextual view) is a far cry from the Reformed view—which has God predetermining every deed they would perform. (Remember that Reformed Theology takes the liberty to redefine "*foreknew*" as foreordained or predestinated.) The "*foreknew*" of Romans 8:29 does not communicate that God "*foreknew*" believers in the sense of predestining them to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree.

The Reformed view: God predestines the elect to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Thus, all of the elect were "*predestined*" (Romans 8:29-30) to be saved.

Rebuttal: Should the elect have been predestined to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree (as Reformed Theology supposes), God's foreknowledge could not precede such an arrangement due to foreknowledge meaning "to know beforehand." God cannot foreknow what has always existed. Eternal decrees have always existed. Hence, Reformed Theology is forced to redefine "*foreknew*" of Romans 8:29 as "foreordained" or "predestined," which was earlier proven inconsistent.