

My response to
"Predestined, Called, Justified, Glorified" by John Piper
by Stephen M. Golden, © February 11, 2015

This work is in response to a video I was asked to review on the Desiring God Web site.¹ The presenter is one named John Piper. The topic essentially is regarding predestination, and the assumption is that we *are* predestined.

Mr. Piper's comments in the video are concerning Romans 8:28-30:

[28] And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.[29] For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Mr. Piper's perspective seems to be from a classic Calvinistic position, and he presents his case accordingly.

Starting at verse 30, Mr. Piper says "He foreknew us" and "He predestined us". However, the passage does not say he "foreknew *us*" and "predestined *us*," it says "for those God foreknew..." so, he's changing the verse based on what he already believes. That is eisegesis.²

The verse says, "For those whom he foreknew..." Who are those He foreknew? Is it specific individuals or a general group as determined by His plan? It's ambiguous, but it *is* plural.

I believe it is a general reference to all who would believe on His Son. God knew many would be "called" and would follow His Son. God saw in advance that many would respond, and for those, He set up a plan (predetermined, not predestined) for them to hear the Word, respond, and become "conformed to the likeness of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." He didn't predestine the people, He predetermined the plan for the people to be like His Son.

The Greek word in the verse that most commonly gets translated as "predestined" is *proorizó*, and doesn't carry the same meaning as we have ascribed to the word "predestined" in the 21st century. For us, predestined means "forced," or "decided in advance for us." That is, if we are of "those He predestined", we have no choice in the matter, God has forced His will upon us.

Instead of "forced," I believe the proper meaning for *proorizó* is "decided in advance," and the thing God decided in advance was not the **who**, but the **what**.

¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/labs/predestined-called-justified-glorified>

² **Eisegesis** (*/ˌaɪsəˈdʒiːsəs/*; from the [Greek](#) preposition εἰς "into" and the ending from the English word [exegesis](#), which in turn is derived from ἐξηγεῖσθαι "to lead out"[ⓘ]) is the process of interpreting a text or portion of text in such a way that the process introduces one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases into and onto the text. This is commonly referred to as *reading into* the text.

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Of *proorizó*, Strong³ says:

proorizó: to predetermine, foreordain

Original Word: προορίζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: proorizó

Phonetic Spelling: (pro-or-id'-zo)

Short Definition: I foreordain, predetermine

Definition: I foreordain, predetermine, mark out beforehand.

God worked out his plan in advance, and continues to work it to its end. Otherwise, why would He have to call them? If God predestines it, it's going to happen. He wouldn't have to call anyone. He wouldn't have to do anything. Nevertheless, we see that God actively works to carry out His will. In John 5:17 "Jesus said to them, 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.'" It's not something that's just a given. You see, the point of Romans 8:28-30 is *not* that God has predestined who **would** and **would not** go to Heaven. The point is that God is calling all who will believe to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. In 2 Peter 3:9b we read God is "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." If the "who" is predestined, this verse makes no sense. If God wants all to come to repentance, why would he have only called some?

Taking Mr. Piper's view of Romans 8:28-30, if God didn't predestine it, as Mr. Piper presented it, **all** cannot come to repentance. Salvation becomes not about God's will for everyone (or God's willingness that none should perish) but who God has predestined, and this view is in direct conflict with this verse and *many* others.

This ties in very well with a similar understanding of Ephesians 1:4-5:

[4] "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love [5] he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—"

God set a plan in motion before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5) for us to be holy and blameless in His sight. This plan existed before the fall. It was His desire for us before the fall that we would be holy and blameless, and we *were*. This particular plan was **not** the Gospel. The Gospel was necessary because we rebelled. When God first created man, His plan was that we would be "conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." If we had not "fallen" in the garden, we would have remained holy and blameless. We were going to be adopted through Jesus Christ even before the fall. It's just

³ Biblehub.com, Strong's Greek: 4309. προορίζω (proorizó) -- to predetermine, foreordain

Biblehub.com,. (2015). Strong's Greek: 4309. προορίζω (proorizó) -- to predetermine, foreordain. Retrieved 12 February 2015, from <http://biblehub.com/greek/4309.htm>

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that Jesus wouldn't have had to die if we hadn't rebelled against the Father. The adoption would have gone smoother. I believe there is a much bigger picture than we see. It involves Satan, fallen angels, promises, agreements, and previous commitments.

Mr. Piper says, "Between predestination and glorification are the steps: called and justified." And he says, "It doesn't say 'some of those whom he called he justified'. It doesn't say 'some of those he justified he glorified'." "It says 'those', meaning all of them." "Everyone who is predestined... will in fact, get there." "He calls into existence things that don't exist, like my faith." "If God would leave us to ourselves and [not call us,] nobody would live." For Mr. Piper, it's a foregone conclusion that we're predestined, a true Calvinistic position (Unconditional Election).⁴ I completely reject Calvinism as a great diversion from Satan. There is no hope for the World in that message. There is no hope for any particular individual in that message, because today, you don't know if you're one of the 'foreknown.' You won't know tomorrow, either. In fact, you won't know if you're saved until you die!

Mr. Piper tries to tie Romans 8:7-8 to the topic by implying that the mind of everyone who is not called is set on flesh. Absurd. Indeed, the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, but the passage does not say everyone who is not saved has a mind set on flesh. This verse is totally off-topic. He is under the belief that before a person is "saved" his mind is set on the flesh, and that no one can be saved unless God has predestined it. Again, Calvinism. This is the "Total Depravity" point of Calvinism. I reject it. There are *many* Scriptural examples of people who sought God, but were not yet saved: Lois and Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5), Cornelius (Acts 10), Apollos (Acts 18), the Eunuch (Acts 8), just to name a few. Conceptually, many "gentiles" who have never heard the Word "are righteous in God's sight" as we see in Romans 2:13-16.

Mr. Piper's view seems to be a bit prideful: "I'm so glad God chose to call me." He seems to be saying that without being called, you cannot be saved. (Which is another point of Calvinism: Limited Atonement.) As such, salvation is not a choice, and you cannot "train up a child in the way he should go"⁵ and expect him to live a life of honoring God. Also, there's no point in praying for someone's salvation under this theology. They're either predestined, or they're not.

But wait... If we're predestined... then His call is necessary... and God himself is predestined. He had no choice but to call those He foreknew. Those He predestined... all of them... He called, because He *had* to because He predestined them and He therefore predestined himself.

⁴ See also my Refutation of Calvinism: <http://smgolden.com/documents/Calvinism--Refuted-Item-by-Item.pdf>

⁵ Proverbs 22:6

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Then Mr. Piper says He called them to believe and “when they believe, they are justified”. Well, that's not what the verse says. The verse says He called them and those He called, He justified. If we're going to go with what the verse said, and say God had to call them, then it follows that God had to justify them, whether they believed or not!

Then he refers to Revelation 13:8 as if it is talking about Christ being slain for sinners in God's mind from before the foundation of the world, and yet the verse is talking about the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim. It says those “whose “names have not been written...” These are beings whose names were **never written** in the Book of Life. As opposed to those whose names have been **blotted out** from the Book of Life.⁶ You can't blot out something that was never written. But Satan has been successful over the years in removing this information from our history and theology.

I view Mr. Piper's efforts to explain Romans 8:28-30 as labored theology and certainly not one that could be derived from a straightforward reading of Scripture. I cannot believe God's Word is that difficult to understand. If what he says is correct, there are many other passages that must be reconciled in order to come to a coherent conclusion on this subject.⁷ He doesn't use other scriptures to *reinforce* his point, but instead, he uses a chain of selected phrases from scripture to *construct* a point. There's a big difference. You would never come to his conclusion if you didn't happen to join the scriptures together in the way he happens to have done. What he does is a bit like joining Matthew 27:5 “He went away and hanged himself.” with Luke 10:37 “Go and do likewise.”

He talks about security and assurance, but this theology destroys the possibility of both! If only the predestined will be saved, how do you know if you're one of those predestined to be saved?

How can you have an “absolutely rock solid foundation for all things will work together for good” [*sic*] for **you** if you don't know whether you're one of the predestined, because in Mr. Piper's theology (as in Calvinism), you can only be saved if you're one of the predestined, and you won't know that until you're dead!

Mr. Piper recaps his view by saying, “The argument that they will [work together for good] is 'we're foreknown, we're predestined', we are 'called', we are 'justified', and we are 'glorified'.” But that's illogical. He substituted “we” for “those.” You don't know if you're one of “those”! He also indicates that the “good” in this verse is our “salvation” and so the verse, if you take his interpretation, offers no comfort for things working out in this life, except that you're saved IF you're one of “those.”

⁶ See my page on Nephilim: <http://smgolden.com/nephilim.php>

⁷ The Knowledge of God, <http://smgolden.com/documents/knowledge-of-God.pdf>

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He finishes by saying, "Christ is both the ground of our glorification and the goal of our glorification." That sentence has no meaning to me.

Ultimately, Mr. Piper's views (Calvinism) and mine are fundamentally at odds and mutually exclusive. I suspect our Christian experience and our witnesses have little in common but the name of Christ itself. May God help our understanding, and may His grace cover us where we fail. Amen.