
Mission 119 Ministries

DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM
EPISODE 22: COMMON PROOF TEXT
ROMANS 8:28-30

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SERIES GOALS

- **Short, focused lessons**
 - **Explain Calvinism**
 - **Address claims of Calvinism**
 - **Exegetically**
 - **Historical**
 - **Philosophically**
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EPIISODE GOAL

- Properly exegete romans 8:28-30, a common proof text for the TULIP doctrines “unconditional election” and “irresistible grace”**



EXEGETICAL APPROACH

- **Measure proof texts against every element of the truth proposition they are offered to prove**
 - **Focus on context, flow of argument, and structure of the book / epistle that contains the proof text**
 - **How does the TULIP interpretation make sense not only of the immediate context, but of the larger argument and structure of the book?**
 - **Example: Some use Romans 10 as a proof text for “sinner’s prayer” but why would Paul put it there?**
 - **Properly define key words (use lexicons rather than just making up fake definitions)**
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PROOF TEXT

Romans 8:²⁸ We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are **called** according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those he foreknew he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he **predestined**, he also **called**; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

CONTEXT

- **The central verses are Romans 1:16-17 that tell us that (1) the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe, (2) the gospel reveals the righteousness of God, (3) the righteous live from faith to faith**
 - **Paul concludes his material on justification (by faith righteousness) in Romans 4**
 - **In Romans 5-8, Paul addresses sanctification, that is, how Christians can reign in life (5:17) as they reflect the righteousness of God in their conduct**
 - **Romans 8 primarily focuses on experiencing (eternal) life by walking in the Spirit rather than experiencing death by walking according to the flesh, and the paragraphs before the proof text bring in the issue of suffering for Christ (something Paul also addressed in Romans 5)**
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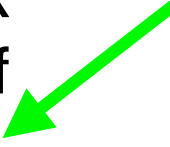
Romans 8:²⁸ We know that **all things** ← work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

What are all things? All things means everything including the suffering Paul just discussed.

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What is the good? Is it outward good in the sense that all your problems will go away, or is it something else? Consistent with Romans 5:3-5 and several other NT passages, the trials of life, including suffering, are central to our growth.

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Who receives the good? Those who love God. Here, love is agapaō and is about our choices and actions not emotions. These Christians put God first. This is the group he has been discussing throughout chapter 8 who walk in the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit, and likely suffer for Christ as a result. They are participating with the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their growth and so are being conformed to the likeness of JC during this mortal life.

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Looking up the key words

“called” is Gr. klētos and means “pertaining to being invited, *called, invited* to a meal” (BDAG)

“foreknew” is Gr. proginōskō and means “to know beforehand or in advance, *have foreknowledge*” (BDAG)

“predestined” is Gr. proorizō and means to “decide upon beforehand, *predetermine*” (BDAG)

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What does “according to purpose” describe? Reformed theology makes “according to purpose” just about the the invitation. But the parallel is the prior verse, 8:27: ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints **according to** the will of **God**. In the context of suffering Christians, the H.S. intercedes for us in accordance with God’s will, and as a result we know everything will work out for good to those who love God, according to His purpose.

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TULIP: God elected people to save before the foundation of the world, then "foreknew" them based on that election (or decree), then effectually called them, then called them with the gospel, and then justified them.

PAUL: God foreknew them, then "predestined" them (note the verse does not say "to salvation"), and then called them. It makes no sense to suggest that God predestined people to do exactly (i.e., place faith in Christ) what God foreknew they were going to do anyway.

God knew beforehand those who will accept the invitation

God decided beforehand they be conformed to JC

God invited them (2 Thess. 2:14 "He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.; also Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God)

God justified them

God glorified them

If we simply exegete the Text for what it says and not write into it, there is nothing here about unconditional election to salvation or about irresistible grace (an efficacious call to salvation). This is God's assurance to believers that no matter how tough life may get, God has a plan and they have a future.