

Called

The Greek word *kletos* klay·tos translated “call” usually refers to an invitation and is often used in Scripture to suggest the one called is divinely selected or appointed to some office. “Chosen” in the passage below is similar, *eklektos* ek·lek·tos, and should be understood when applied to certain individual Christians as appointed by God to the most exalted office conceivable, choice, select, the best of its kind or class, excellence preeminent.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a **chosen** race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who **called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This term “call” is used several ways in Scripture. Two of those ways are relative to our subject. First way is as a call to salvation through the presenting of the Gospel as pictured in the above passage—“called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” so that “once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”.

The 1 Peter passage is speaking of a specific calling to salvation and limited to those who respond with positive volition. While it does not use the term for “call,” the Romans 1 passage below speaks of this same calling to salvation.

Rom 1:19 For what can be **known about God is plain to them**, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse**. ²¹ For although **they knew God**, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of

the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Matt 22:14 “For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Technically, all are called to salvation, which we refer to as the “universal calling”. Anyone potentially can respond to this universal calling. The Romans passage above alludes to this universal calling in that God has revealed Himself in His creation and thus “called” all mankind to know Him.

The second form of calling is being called to a specific task, purpose, or ministry after the initial calling to salvation. In Galatians Paul speaks of his own specific calling to minister to the Gentiles.

Gal 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who **called me** by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, **in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles...**

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, **called to be an apostle**, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ **including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ**, ⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and **called to be saints**

Note the passage above speaks of both the calling to some ministry. “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God” (v1). And we see the call to salvation in verses 6 and 7 in the phrases, “including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ” and “called to be saints”.

Our focus in this study will be on this initial calling of a person to salvation.

As the 1 Peter passage above indicates, believers are called out of the darkness of sin into the marvelous light. This calling is an act of God as verse 9 suggests (the excellencies of him who called you). It is the one being called who responds to this calling, but the response is expected to be positive as implied in the following passage.

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

The Epistles, especially those of Paul, make clear the theological meaning of Christ's call. It comes from God, through the gospel for salvation.

2 Thes 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because **God chose you** as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this **he called you** through our gospel, **so that you may obtain the glory** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The NKJV translates "That you may obtain..." as "for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," which is a more accurate translation than the ESV. "May" in English suggests the possibility of not obtaining Glory, and that is NOT what the Greek is saying. Being called implies you *will* obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus. No wiggle room is allowed.

These believers called are also called to other purposes that are related to the call to salvation here seen as God's kingdom and fellowship ...

1 Thes. 2:12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

1 Cor. 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The call in the 1 Thessalonians 2:12 passage above is a “call” to fellowship that should be seen as a vitally alive spiritual walk—“exhort and encourage to walk in a manner worthy of God”. A “call” to salvation, therefore, should also be seen as a call to a righteous lifestyle and fellowship with God that is associated with the calling.

Glorification

Rom 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and **those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**

Rom 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him **that we may also be glorified with him.**

Col 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That word translated “provided” in Romans 8:16 (ESV) is translated as “if indeed” in the NKJV and should be seen as “since,” implying actuality and not merely potential. The believer will indeed suffer with Christ.

That word “hope” in the Greek in the Colossians passage should be viewed as “confident expectation”.

The Romans 8:30 passage makes it clear that those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What is glorified? It is the Greek *doxazo* /dox·ad·zo/ which means to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate, to honor, do honor to, hold in honor.

To be glorified is another way of saying that God's children will be "conformed" to His Son as God's ultimate "purpose". No longer will they "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) but will ultimately be returned to the state in which we were originally created before the fall—perfect.

When does this happen? Glorification is associated with ultimate sanctification (saved future tense), in which the believer will experience all that he is promised because of our salvation (past tense) and identification with Christ (in Christ). Glory is *glimpsed* here on earth when the believer experiences and demonstrates maximum Christ likeness by "walking by means of the Spirit" (Gal 5:16) and seen as the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) formed in the "walking" believer. But that is only a temporary state of righteous that we can experience in this life, which, of course, can be interrupted by sin in the life of the believer. It will be experienced fully and forever in eternity once we receive our resurrection bodies. This is glorification in the ultimate sense.

Col 3:4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

As this passage states, our vitally alive spiritual life *is* Christ in us, and when He returns (Second Advent) in glory, we will be with Him in our glorified, resurrection bodies.

It is important to note that "glorified" in the Romans 8:30 passage above is in the **past tense because this final step is so certain that in God's eyes it is as good as done**. If you are called to salvation and respond with positive volition (faith/saved), then there is *not the slightest doubt* that God will bring you to final glory. There are zero exceptions allowed for in this passage. Another notch for eternal security.

Foreknowledge, Predestination, and the Divine Decree

Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many

brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

God's purpose for believers is found in these verses. What God proposes will happen and is seen here to be as certain as day following night. His purpose will be realized no matter what.

It begins with the phrase “And we know...” The word, *oidamen* for “know” comes to us via the Latin as our English word “video”. However, in this application *oidamen* does not imply perception through visual stimuli, rather this is a known fact. It is here stated as so well known as to be common knowledge among believers.

Believers, Paul began, know of sanctification’s certainty, and that knowledge is gained by spiritual perception. Christians **know** intuitively (*oidamen*)—though they may not always fully understand and sense it experientially. What do we “know”? **That in all things God works for the good of those who love Him** (lit., “to the ones who love God He works all things together unto good”). These “things” themselves may not be good, but God harmonizes them together for the believers’ ultimate good, because His goal is to bring them to perfection in His presence (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

Even adversities and afflictions contribute to “all things” = good. The active voice, present tense of the verb *synergei* (“He works together”) emphasizes that this is a continuing activity of God. And His working is on behalf of “those who love Him,” who are further identified as the ones **who have been called according to His purpose**. It is significant that a believer’s love for God *follows* God’s calling of him and is undoubtedly the product of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:19). The word for “purpose” is *prothesin*, God’s plan (Paul used the same word in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11).

“Called” here implies more than being invited to receive Christ; it means to be summoned to and given salvation (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30).

Synergei translated “works together” is where we get our modern word “synergy”. The word implies a pulling together of seemingly unrelated, discordant, even conflicting and negative things, events, and actions. What gets synergized? All things ...

All things are just that, everything that happens in our lives, the good and the bad. Yes, even the bad. These "all things" and God's providential synergistic activity have a purpose, which is “good” or *agathos*, a word that refers to a good that has value superior to the sum of its parts. “All things” are the issues, tests, trials, tribulations and even blessings in our lives. While it may not seem so at the time, God promises those that love Him, which is an expectation because of salvation, that we will have these “all things” converted to *agathos*, regardless of their constitution good or bad. Who gets this benefit? Those called according to God's purpose who love Him.

This is wonderful and especially helpful to us, but my focus is not on verse 28. My focus will be on what follows. For those who love God there is an order of events that God has set out in the rest of 28 and 29-30.

- God foreknew us in eternity past
- And He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His son
- Then He called us for His purpose
- And those He called, He also justified
- And those He justified, He also glorified.

God makes a choice and acts on that choice, a sovereign decision by Him. Yet man was created a free moral agent by God and is held accountable for his actions. Well, this sounds like a contradiction—God chooses, but man has a free will? How does that work?

Eph 1:4 According as **he hath chosen us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **5*** **Having predestinated us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure **of his will**, **6*** To the praise of the glory of **his grace**, wherein **he hath made us** accepted in the beloved. **7*** **In whom** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of **his grace**; **8*** Wherein **he hath abounded** toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **9*** Having made

known unto us the mystery of **his will**, according to **his good pleasure** which **he hath purposed in himself**: 10* That in the dispensation of the fullness of times **he might gather** together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: 11* In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being **predestinated according to the purpose of him** who worketh all things after the counsel of **his own will**: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

This passage is loaded with the sovereignty of God. God has chosen believers before the foundations of the world were even laid out—“That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” God's purpose is to make believer's holy (sanctified or set apart) and blameless or as Romans 8:29-30 says “conformed to the image of his Son”—that we would be glorified

How did God do this? He predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. Predestined means to be marked out before hand. The chosen are predestined to be adopted as sons of God in Jesus Christ, thus it is absolutely certain that the chosen will accept Christ. All of this was done "according to the good pleasure of his will" (V5). God made a choice according to His own sovereign will and pleasure.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

We need to define and develop a few terms and concepts before we can really understand this process.

Omniscience

God's foreknowledge is part of His omniscience. To understand foreknowledge, it helps to understand omniscience. That is God knows all: your innermost secrets, your past, your future, including what might have

been if you make choices other than those you do make. This English word is derived from two Latin words: *omnis*, meaning “all,” and *sciens*, which means “knowing”—“all knowing.”

God's omniscience lacks NOTHING by way of perception! Omniscience in God comprehends all things: things past, things present, things future, and *includes all the possible as well as the actual*. It includes what did happen and will happen *PLUS all the possible alternatives to that all the way into eternity*. We called this “middle knowledge” or knowledge of the counterfactuals. We will look at this closer a little later.

God's knowledge is not related to or limited by time. Our knowledge is based on time, and we are limited by time. God's knowledge is superimposed over time. To God the things of the past are as real as those present, and things future are as real as those past. God sees all His program of events in their unified whole. Omniscience brings everything—past, present, and future—with equal reality and clarity before the mind of God.

Divine knowledge is simultaneous as opposed to a succession of learnings. In the mind of God, the knowledge of one thing is not before another. One act of knowledge does not beget another. For man, one thing is before another, one year before another, one act of knowledge before another, one generation of man before another; one is the cause and the other is the effect. In man's mind, there is such a succession, and God knows there will be a succession, but there is no such order in God's knowledge. He knows all these successions by one glance. God knew all simultaneously in eternity past, and furthermore, He always knew it. Omniscience is not the ability to acquire knowledge, but is the actual possession of knowledge.

Foreknowledge

Part of God's omniscience is His foreknowledge. Foreknowledge is restricted to the actual and *excludes the merely possible*. It comes from the Greek *proginosko prog-in-ocē'-ko*, meaning to know something beforehand. Foreknowledge is far more than just a knowledge of future events or preknowledge of future events. Foreknowledge is that which God Himself proposes to bring to pass, and as such, foreknowledge is related to

foreordination in that it is part of the divine decree of God. Foreknowledge is that which God proposes to bring to pass.

By definition then, God's foreknowledge is far more than just a knowledge of your existence and what you will do with your life. It implies an intimate knowledge of you *and your every thought and action*. God foreknows the actions of all moral agents. He knows what decisions you will make and what actions will result from those decisions. This does not preclude the free will of man.

This divine foreknowledge, in and of itself, implies no element of necessity or determination, though it does imply certainty. Foreknowledge does not mean that something has to happen, only that it is absolutely certain that it will happen. It is what God proposes to happen, and with that comes an extreme degree of certainty.

The question of free will in the free moral agent arises when it is asked whether man has freedom to act other than as God foreknew he would act. The answer is that the human will is indeed capable of electing a different course of that which was foreknown, *but he will not do so*. If he did, what he did would be that which was foreknown.

Divine foreknowledge does not coerce. It merely knows what human choice and action will be. This does not imply that God is acting on preknown human decisions. That is a violation of the sovereignty of God. For God to base His plan on the foibles of human depravity would be risky in the extreme. In other words, God does not merely look into the future to see what you will do and decree it to happen as foreseen. God, in His sovereignty, will decide what will happen as part of His plan, *but He does it without violating your free will*. God determines the course of your life, actually decrees it to happen exactly as He foreknew it.

Confused????

MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE – Perhaps this will help.

God's knowledge of you is so intimate and so detailed that He is able to predict with absolute certainty what your actions will be when faced with any number of given circumstances that might be placed in your path. We

call this “middle knowledge,” the knowledge of the counterfactuals, that is what could be or the merely possible. This is more than just a simple and shallow understanding of what your decisions will be. This is a deep and intimate understanding of your soul and how you react to all things. With His intimate understanding of human nature, God is able to engineer or manage the infinitely complex human circumstances and events to drive individual free will decisions in order that He arrives at His intended objective exactly as He had purposed. With this Middle Knowledge, God is able decree precisely what will come to pass.

Divine Decree

The divine decree takes what is foreknown as certain and makes it certain. This is important. What God foreknows is absolutely certain to happen, not because He foreknows it, but because of the fact that he decreed it.

God's foreknowledge is simply God's knowledge of His own eternal purpose. It is what God purposes to do, and it is based on His sovereign decisions, according to His plan and His intimate understanding of human nature and infinite ability to control events—God's omnipotence. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

Review:

- God's omniscience is the knowledge of all things: things past, things present, things future, and includes the possible as well as the actual.
- God's foreknowledge is that part of God's omniscience that deals exclusively with the actual and excludes the merely possible.
- God's foreknowledge is, therefore, a more limited aspect of His omniscience.
- Middle Knowledge is a part of God's omniscience and includes a deep and intimate understanding of how His creation will behave under any given set of circumstances.
- Middle Knowledge is God's knowledge of the counterfactuals, that is what could be or the merely possible.
- With this middle knowledge, God is able to “engineer” the countless events in a believer's life that will lead that person to make the right decision for God's plan for his life without coercing the believer's free will.

- God's foreknowledge is more than just a superficial fore-knowing of future human activity.
- God's foreknowledge is viewed as absolutely certain
- **And this certainty is a result of human free will making decisions based on circumstances controlled by God that resulted from His intimate understanding of man.**
- Man, as a free moral agent, is free to choose other than what is foreknown, but such a choice would become that which is foreknown by God.
- God's foreknowledge does not make anything certain
- It views only that which is certain
- God makes what is foreknown certain by divine decree.

Since foreknowledge is what God actually proposes to bring to pass, it is part of the divine decree. The whole order of events from the smallest detail to the greatest operates under the determining decree of God.

Foreordination takes what is foreknown and determined and makes it certain. Foreordination then is part of the divine decree. It is related to the saved, the unsaved, and also the "all things". Foreordination includes all that WILL happen concerning a person's life whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. It takes God's foreknowledge and decrees it to happen as foreknown

Predestination is that part of foreordination that is related ONLY to the believer and his salvation (past tense), sanctification (present tense), and ultimate glorification (future tense). Nowhere in Scripture is it ever suggested that the unbeliever is predestined to his lost state. In fact it is said **all** are lost, but some are predestined to election. Predestination means to "mark off" and as such is related conceptually to sanctification, which means to set aside as God's own.

There are two theological views on this subject we need to consider: Armenian view is that God predestinates ONLY what He foreknows. The Extreme Calvinist contends that God foreknows ONLY because He has first predestinated it. That is nothing can be foreknown as certain unless God first makes it certain by predestination.

Attempts to reconcile the order of these two great divine operatives are doomed to failure because they are not independent but interdependent actions of God's will. God can neither predestinate what He does not foreknow, nor can He foreknow what He has not predestinated.

God wants believers who chose Him, and He does not coerce. Coercion brings Him no glory, but free choice does, therefore, God chooses anyone who will freely chose Him. And through His Middle Knowledge, he knows exactly what influences He can bring to bear on a person that is short of coercion so they will freely chose Him. God in his omnipotence decrees those events and influences to take place in human history that will lead all the “whoever” to a saving knowledge of Christ. ALL are called, but only the “whoever” are predestined and answer the call.

Romans 8:28* And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

This passage clearly states that certain persons are called according to God's purpose and are objects of God's foreknowledge and predestination. It goes on to **declare that those thus designated WILL reach the destiny divinely purposed.** And God is causing everything to work together to that end.

Conversely, there are some people for which there is no argument or set of life events that will lead that person to faith in Christ without coercion. We all know people like that. God has a purpose, and he has sovereignly chosen some for that purpose. By implication, others were not so chosen. Those He chose He foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. And those thus chosen will ultimately reach God's divinely decreed destiny. There is no occasion for failure. **It will come to pass exactly as purposed by God!** To that end, the chosen ones can safely assume that whatever happens in their lives is part of God's divine plan and serves His divine purpose. **Nothing** is outside His control, not

even those who reject Him. **Everything** serves His divine purpose and is part of His plan to bring the believer to perfection.

Because of the omniscience of God, what is foreknown and predestined **will come to past**. If God calls someone to faith, and foreknows that he will, and predestines it to happen in the divine decree, then for that person to lose his salvation implies that God is not able to bring to past what he foreknows, predestinates and decrees, and that God has somehow made a mistake in calling that person.

God does **NOT** make mistakes.