

Divine Shaping
Harmony M.B.C., March 1, 2009 (Morning)
Faith B.C., July 8, 2009 (midweek evening)
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Romans 8:29 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.

This verse is often used by Baptists to support the bible truth that God made plans for our salvation before the world began. This is one of the plainest verses in the bible on the subject, although there are others. We know that in Ephesians 1:5, the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle to write that our appointment to be children of God was the direct result of a previous intention of God: “Having **predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” Then again, he points out in this same chapter that the entire inheritance that we both now have part of, and will have in a fullness in eternity, was set up by God as an intent back in what we sometimes call eternity past: (Ephesians 1:11) “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...”

We find this bible truth nailed down again by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:9 when he wrote concerning God’s actions upon us: “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,**”

We find Peter expressing the eternal intent of God in another way, in which he both points to the fact that God knew beforehand both that He would save us, and knew the process he would use: 1Peter 1:2 “Elect **according to the foreknowledge of God** the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. We notice in Peter’s remarks that we were set apart (sanctified) by action of the Holy Spirit for the express purpose of (unto) being obedient to the Gospel and being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

So, this is a great biblical truth. But that will not be the focus of our message this morning. Rather, I want to turn back to our text passage and look at why Paul brought up this subject in the first place. Note: “...he also did predestinate (us) *to be* **conformed to the image of his Son...**” This revelation is an enormous truth that has so many implications for us as we go along in this world. It explains so much about what is going on in our lives as believers. It explains so much about how things fall out the way they do. So, let’s look at three things about this great truth:

1. The Fact Contained In This Statement From God
2. The Effect of This Settled Intent of God,
3. The Outcome of God’s Intent

I. The Fact of It

- It is the primary intent of God concerning what we are to become. His primary intent is to conform us to the image of Christ
- It is as certain as any other foreordained purpose of God. Like all other things that God planned before He created the world, this was also planned. So, if any of God’s things that

He determined to do long before He did them have come to pass, this intention of His will also come to pass.

- It is as certain as God is omnipotent. If God has the power to make anything and everything come to pass that He intends, then conforming us to the image of Christ is controlled by His all powerful-ness.

With these facts established and considered, let's now think about:

II. The Effect of This Settled Intent of God

- When God intends something, He knows how He is going to perform it (God is never surprised)

- We can see three forces used by the Lord to accomplish this foreordained purpose: the world, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. We want to look at each of these to see God's effects upon us in relation to these.

A. The world

- > There's a lot we could say about God's use of the world in the work of conforming us to the image of Christ. We could talk about:
 - > the hidden hatred of those of this world
 - > the fact of living in a world lorded over by Satan himself
 - > the trials that we face simply living in a world where sin abounds and unregenerate men conspire evil things which are sure to pain the children of God (it's not as though lost people always intentionally set up processes and systems that work grief on the children of God; many of their deeds are unconscious. But, when unregenerate men express themselves in business, government, human relations, or any other thing, their processes originate from a perverted source and so will be bound to cause grief to the children of God who serve another kingdom)

- All these things work to shape our thoughts, our wishes, our purposes...so we could talk about any or all of them. But I want to look at one aspect of how God uses the world to shape His people into the image of Christ, and I want to take this aspect from a biblical account about Gideon and his war with two Midianite kings.

- > In Judges 8, we find Gideon fulfilling the purpose of God in freeing the Israelites from the Midianite reign.
 - He is pursuing Zeba and Zalmunna (Midianite kings)
 - He passes through Succoth, a settlement of the tribe of Gad on the west side of Jordan.
 - He asks for help from the Israelites; they decline to help
 - He promises he would return as a victor over the Midianites and will deal with them then
 - Something he says, and what he does, so accurately fits with the very process that God so often uses with us to shape us like Jesus: (read Judges 8:7 and 16) "And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. 16 And he took the elders of the city, and **thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.**

B. The Holy Spirit

- > Helps us understand the purpose of God for our lives
 - 1Cor 2:9-10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have

entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

- > Clarifies for us the actions of God in our lives: Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both **to will and to do of his good pleasure.**
- > Supervises us along our path
- > Cautions us about wrong paths
- > Communicates our needs and desires to God

C. The Word

- > Provides us with the thoughts of God
- > Provides us with the information about the pattern of God
- > Presents us with the example we need to follow in our conforming process
- > Encourages us as the hand of God does its work of conforming (that work is sometimes very impacting and tends to knock us flat to the ground and leave us there seemingly wounded or broken)
- > Promises us victory and rest: In 1 Cor. 15, Paul writes about the terrible effect of death on humans, how the sting of death is sin, and how corruptible flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; but then he writes about how through Christ we have overcome all those effects and ends by saying:
 - 1Cor. 15:57 But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Outcome of God's Intent

He intends to grow us now: 1Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, **make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.**

He intends to complete that growth in a transformation: 1Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The completeness of that growth is seen by the writings of John in 1John 3:2: Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.