

Romans 8:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son (hóti hoûs proégnō, kai proōrisen summórphous tēs eikónos toû huiou autoû)—Proégnō ("foreknew") isn't mere awareness but electing love—God set His affection on specific individuals before creation (1 Peter 1:2, 20; Amos 3:2 uses "know" for covenant love). Proōrisen ("predestined") means marked out beforehand, predetermined. The goal: summórphous tēs eikónos toû huiou ("conformed to the image of His Son")—believers transformed into Christ's moral likeness now (2 Corinthians 3:18), physical likeness at resurrection (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

That he might be the firstborn among many brethren (eis tò eînai autòn prōtótokon en polloîs adelophoîs)—Prōtótokos ("firstborn") indicates both priority and preeminence (Colossians 1:15, 18). Christ is the prototype; believers are copies. He is the first to rise in glorified body; we follow. God's ultimate purpose in election is a redeemed family resembling the beloved Son, with Christ as the elder brother among countless siblings.

Historical Context

This verse anchors the "golden chain of redemption" (vv. 29-30). Pelagius denied predestination; Augustine affirmed it. The Reformation crystallized the doctrine: unconditional election based on God's sovereign will, not foreseen faith or works.

Arminianism redefined foreknowledge as foresight of faith; Calvinism maintains it as electing love.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's "foreknowledge" as electing love differ from mere advance awareness of who would believe?
2. What does being "conformed to Christ's image" involve—what specific character qualities?
3. How does Christ being "firstborn among many brethren" provide assurance of your resurrection and glorification?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	οὗς	προέγνω	καὶ	προώρισεν	συμμόρφους	τῆς	
For	whom	he did foreknow	also	did predestinate	to be conformed	G3588	
G3754	G3739	G4267	G2532	G4309	G4832		
εἰκόνης	τοῦ	υἱοῦ	αὐτοῦ	εἰς	τὸ	εἶναι	αὐτὸν
to the image	G3588	Son	he	that	G3588	might be	he
G1504		G5207	G846	G1519		G1511	G846
πρωτότοκον	ἐν	πολλοῖς	ἀδελφοῖς·				
the firstborn	among	many	brethren				
G4416	G1722	G4183	G80				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 1:5 (Parallel theme): Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Ephesians 1:11 (Parallel theme): 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:

2 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Who hath saved us, and called us with an 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,

1 Peter 1:20 (Parallel theme): Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Revelation 13:8 (Parallel theme): And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

2 Timothy 2:19 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

1 Corinthians 2:7 (Parallel theme): But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

1 Peter 1:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

1 Corinthians 15:49 (Parallel theme): And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Romans 9:23 (Parallel theme): And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,