

Seven Stages in God's Plan



Secure in God's Choice (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing on this week's inspiring theme, "Secure in God's Choice."

But first, let me say "Thank you" you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests. Each month our listeners write in to tell us of prayer requests that have been wonderfully answered.

Now, back to our theme, "Secure in God's Choice."

In my two previous talks I have explained that God is behind and in control of the whole universe. There is nothing in the whole universe that He does not control. He controls the stars, He controls human history, He controls the nations, He controls individual lives. More important still, God has a plan for each one of our lives, just as He has a plan for the whole universe and He is working that plan out just as surely as He is controlling every other area of the universe. Paul says this plan is designed for our good. We are part of His plan. Everything in our lives is working out that plan. In Romans 8:28 Paul says this:

> "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." (NAS)

Then in the next two verses of Romans, Romans 8:29-30, Paul begins to explain how God goes about doing this. He shows us that there are seven successive stages in the outworking of God's plan. He says this:

> "For who He [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom He predestined, these He also called and whom He called, these He also justified: and whom justified, these He also glorified." (NAS)

If you can follow with me, Paul states there seven successive stages in the conceiving and the outworking of God's plan.

The first, God foreknew.

The second, He predestined.

The third, He called.

The fourth, He justified.

The fifth, He glorified.

However, to get a more complete picture of these stages in God's plan and how they relate to one another, we need to look at two other passages in the New Testament which add to our understanding of this plan. When we have put these passages together we will see that there are actually seven successive stages in God's total plan. We will look now, first of all, in Ephesians 1:3-5:

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His Will..." (NAS)

You see there again the same truth is brought out: God has a plan, He is working it out, and we who believe in Jesus are the very center of that plan. In a certain sense, amazing though it may see, it actually revolves around us. And in the fulfillment of that plan, Paul adds a stage which is not mentioned in Romans 8. He says in Ephesians 1:4:

> "[God] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world..."

So there's another phase of God's plan. God chose us in Christ and this choice didn't take place in time, it's not part of history, God made this choice before the foundation of the world. That's something that's staggering to think of. But we'll see this more fully in a little while.

Now, let's look at the other phase which makes these seven phases of God's plan complete. This is stated in 2 Timothy 1:9 where Paul says:

> "God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." (NAS)

Again, you notice the emphasis on the fact that this plan didn't begin in time. It's not something God thought up as an emergency when problems developed, but it was conceived and settled in the mind of God before history began. This version says, "from all eternity." Another version says, "before time began." You see, we need to get a different perspective in ourselves and our whole situation. We need to look away from just the present and our little problems and irritations and worries. We need to, as Isaiah said, "life up our eyes to the heavens. Look at the starry host." See who created that and see who controls that and see that the same God who created all that and controls all that is the one who has a plan that He is worming out in our lives. And He's so gracious and so wonderful that through His precious Word He reveals to us the way this plan is going to be carried out.

If we put together the various passages of scripture that we have looked at, we will find now these seven successive stages in God's plan.

First of all, He foreknew. It all begins with God's foreknowledge.

Second, on the basis of His foreknowledge He chose us.

Third, on the basis of His choice, He predestined us, and I'll explain these different terms a little more fully in a few moments.

Fourth, He called us.

Fifth, when we responded to His call through Jesus Christ, He saved us.

Sixth, having saved us, He justified us.

And never stop there. I think most Christians thinking stops there but the seventh phase is altogether marvelous: He glorified us.

Let me just say a little bit more about each of those successive stages. First of all, God foreknew. God has total knowledge. We'll look at this more completely in our next talk. But God bases everything on His knowledge. You can say, "How did God know that it would all work out that way?" God knows everything. The past, present and future alike are all known to Him. But it is so important to see that everything

proceeds out of God's foreknowledge. There's nothing random, there's nothing casual. God does not act on impulse, He acts out of total knowledge.

Secondly, He chose us. He chose us to be His. He chose us for a special purpose.

Thirdly, having chosen us, He predestined us. Now that's a word that some people dislike and it frightens others. But the word "predestined" means in simple language, "He worked out the course that our life was to take so that His purposes would be fulfilled." Do you see how logical this all is? It has to go together and it has to go in this order. God foreknew. On the basis of his foreknowledge, He chose. To make His choice effective, He predestined, He worked out in advance the course that our lives were to take. Now all that is in eternity, marvelous though it may see, before creation ever took place, before history was ever set in motion, God had conceived these purposes and worked them out as to how He would carry them out.

Then we move out of eternity into time, and here is a very important moment in the life of each one of us because it is here, at this point, that the eternal purpose of God impacts us individually, it comes out of eternity into time and into our lives, He called us. The word "to call" means two things. "To invite" but also "to summon." It's an invitation but it also has all the authority of a king's summon in it. We are invited to join His family through faith in Jesus Christ. When we respond to that call positively, then God saves us, we enter into salvation. We are saved from sin, from its guilt, from its power, from its defilement. God has provided a total salvation through Jesus Christ.

And when we are saved, God also justifies us. Now the word "justified" is a kind of technical, theological word. It means various things that all go together: to acquit, to reckon righteous, and to make righteous. So, on the basis of the fact that we are saved through faith in Christ, God acquits us of all guilt, He reckons us righteous, and in the process of time, He makes us righteous.

But that's not the end. The final stage is we are glorified. You see, the Bible says we are justified through the resurrection of Christ but we are glorified through the ascension of Christ. We are identified with Christ from death, through burial to resurrection and through ascension and our goal, our destiny, the end of this plan is that we shall share Christ's glory and sit with Him on the throne throughout eternity.

Let me just state those seven stages once again and then I must close.

God foreknew us.

He chose us.

He predestined us.

He called us.

He saved us.

He justified us.

He glorified us.

That's the journey and that's our destination. It's to share God's glory with Jesus Christ on the throne forever.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow we'll be looking together at the first stage in detail: God foreknew us.

Radio Program

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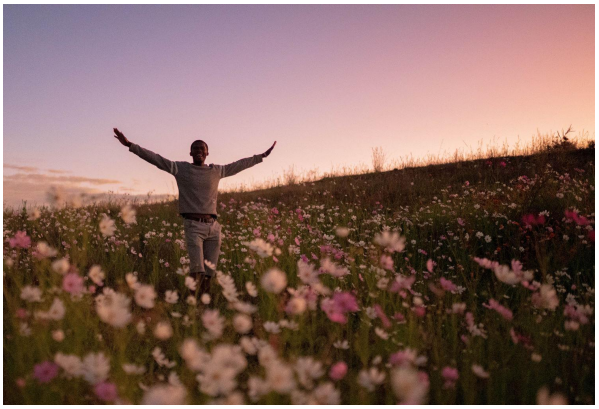


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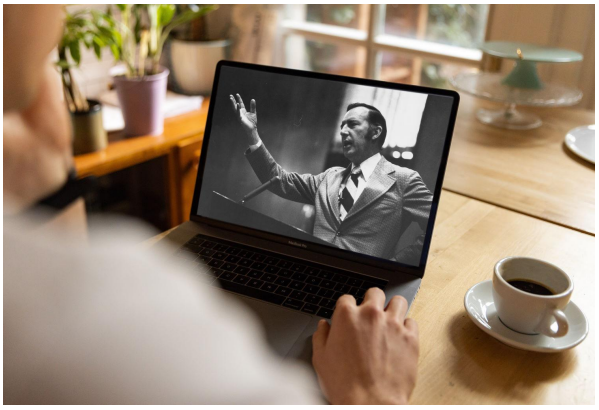
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