

**ROMANS SERIES SEVENTEEN
HOW DOES GOD LOVE ME?**

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Romans 8:28-30; Ps. 139:13-14; Jer. 1:4-5; John 8:10-11

We have all invited friends to come to Casas who are reluctant to come—often because of a previous bad experience in church.

Let's be honest, we have all heard some really bad televangelists or visited some churches that left us wondering if the Jesus they are describing is anything like the real Jesus of the Bible.

SLIDE: Jesus is not some detached, non-dynamic, un-interested and uncaring Person as presented in the Sominex sermon.

SLIDE: Jesus is not some angry, judging, score-keeping judge who delights in leveling punishment without mercy as imagined in the Terminex sermon.

SLIDE: Jesus is not some feel good, slacker, whatever Jesus who dares not challenge the status quo.

SLIDE: He is, in fact, a dynamic, caring, merciful Jesus who is intricately involved in transforming people to look, act, think, behave and love a lot like Himself.

SLIDE: *Romans 8:28-30: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

SLIDE: *29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

SLIDE: *30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

Romans 8:28-30 spans all eternity.

Talking to Julie: “You have at least 5 sermons here.” “I know, I know. What am I going to do?”
“Imagine that your son or daughter is sitting out there—and share with you the most important things you would like for you to know from this passage.”

I want you to get a sense of God's plan for your life that spans all eternity.

BLACKBOARD: Start with God foreknew you before the foundation of the cosmos—predestined a plan for your life—called you to enter into the plan—justified you with the gift of His value—and is in the process of glorifying you to look like Jesus.

SLIDE: **FOREKNOWLEDGE: WHAT DOES IT DO TO YOUR HEART TO KNOW THAT God knew you intimately long before you were born.**

“Know” (γινωσκω) implies intimate understanding of the core of one's being.

Foreknowledge means to fix one's love upon—long before the foundation of the cosmos.

SLIDE: Internet dating service to know all you can about another.
(How many have tried it—if you are already married, please don't raise your hand.)

SLIDE: *Psalm 139:13-14: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;*

SLIDE: Jeremiah 1:4-5: The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

By the way, How can you kill a baby like that—who is sucking his thumb in the womb?

Well, you develop a religion that believes in an accidental creation in which man is the product of random mutations and is nothing more or less than the highest form of animal kind.

The religion of secular humanism looks at that picture and says, "That is not a human child with an eternal soul who is loved by God.

No, what you see in the womb is just a mass of cells with no perceived moral value. Go ahead and suck the life out of it—even though it screams with pain as it is murdered in the womb.

After all, say the devotees of liberal, human secularism, "A pigmy owl has more right to life than an unborn child (I am sorry, they call it a fetus).

It takes a lot of religious faith to declare with confidence that there is no God—and to think that you can kill a baby with impunity.

The Bible, which does not bend or bow down to current, cultural political correctness, declares unequivocally that God knew and loved that baby even before he was born—and He doesn't take lightly those who would murder it—or who support the moral right of a mother to have it sucked out of her womb with a vacuum cleaner.

Before time began God placed His infinite love upon every one. He has a plan for every one.

SLIDE: Like Patrick Steward in X-Men

Machine to track all the mutants in the world. He sees the location of every person.

By the way, many of you are familiar with the ongoing controversy surrounding Election, predestination and free will—between Calvinism (Presbyterians) and Arminianism.

SLIDE: 1 Peter 1:2: "To God's elect, ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ..."

God arbitrarily chose beforehand who would go to Heaven (the elect) or to Hell.
Versus "Whosoever will" may come".

SLIDE: John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

BLACK BOARD: Reconcile: Two opposite extremes:

Election: God arbitrarily chooses the ones He wants; Christ died only for the elect; when God calls the elect they could not resist even if they wanted to.

vs Free Will: Christ died for the whole world, when God calls anyone who wants to can come to Christ for salvation can do so—or not.

Tom Wheeler: I am not certain we will ever resolve the issue until Christ returns and explains it all. I was saved in 1982 and as long as I get there that is all I care about."

I much more Arminianistic: The invitation is for all and all are free to respond.

SLIDE: Henry Ward Beecher: “The elect are the whosoever wills and the non-elect are the whosoever won’ts.”

STORY: Charles Spurgeon: Yellow stripes. Shirt Tails

SLIDE: PREDESTINATION: God predestined from the very foundation of the cosmos that everyone would one day be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

We Know That In All Things God Works For The Good Of Those Who Love Him—

Paul doesn’t say all things are good:

Sickness, suffering, persecution, death, grief and hatred are not good—but they are all essential ingredients in producing a humble, surrendered, powerful, Christ like character.

Like baking a cake. The ingredients that go into making a cake are not very pleasant individually. You ever eaten a spoonful of baking powder? But all of them together make good eating.

This is a causative participle in Greek and means that there are no accidents. God is working and causing all things to mold our character to be like Christ.

SLIDE: *Jeremiah 18:1-4: This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: 2 "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. 4 But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.*

Now we come to verse 5. Put your name in there for “House of Israel.”

SLIDE: *Jeremiah 18:5-6: Then the word of the LORD came to me: 6 "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD.*

SLIDE: *"Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.*

SLIDE: *God is the Potter; we are the clay.*

He has every right to mold us as He chooses.

Sometimes the molding hurts

--but we know this, He is working out a plan.

Life is like a puzzle—We struggle with the pieces--but God has the picture on the box.

SLIDE: Brie Puzzle

SLIDE: When God finishes we will not be standing there sticking our fingers up our noses.

We will be looking a lot like Jesus.

SLIDE: CALLING: God calls us to enter into His eternal plan for our lives.

Those whom God has foreknown and predestined, He now calls.

This is where we get into the act.

This means the Holy Spirit somehow begins to work in our lives. We may be far removed from God, we may have grown up in a totally non-Christian family, we may be involved in a totally non-Christian faith, or we may be from a Christian home.

It does not make any difference. God begins to work and he draws us to himself.

We can say “yes” or “no” (free will); but those who say, “yes,” go on to be justified.

SLIDE: JUSTIFICATION: Justification is the gift of worth.

Receive Christ by faith in a personal decision and receive a right standing with God.

Those who are justified are valuable to God. They are forgiven, cleansed, loved, accepted, and wanted. They are placed in a position impeccable, immaculate, pure, spotless, right, and forgiven before God—securely positioned in His family—intimately tied to His person.

SLIDE: GLORIFICATION: The “good work” of salvation that God began in us before the foundation of the cosmos will one day culminate in our Christlikeness.

The glorification does not occur immediately. It grows over time—until it is completed at our death or the return of Christ—whichever comes sooner.

SLIDE: “I always pray with joy... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:4, 6).

SLIDE: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

SLIDE: What Might Our Image Of Christ Look Like?

Let’s start with this—something we usually avoid when we think about Jesus. Jesus was deeply committed to morals and values that He felt were worth living and dying for

He stood unequivocally against sin.

John 8:10-11: "Woman, ... Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

He stood strongly against religious leaders who led people away from the heart of the real God.

SLIDE: He called false religious leaders: “White washed tombs”—clean as a whistle on the outside, filthy dirty on the inside.

Who are the white-washed tombs of today?

These folks have to be the influential, liberal, secular humanists who in denying the existence of God are leading thousands of people away from the heart of the real God.

Liberal, secular humanists claim that they have no religion. But their beliefs prove otherwise.

Their sacrament is abortion.

Their bible is Roe v. Wade.

Their seminaries are public schools where prayer is prohibited and condoms are free.

Their cosmology is an accidental universe in which man is an inconsequential accident—supported by the Darwinian creation myth of the Origin and Evolution of the Species.

Is it not intriguing to watch the current cultural debates over the teaching of Intelligent Design v. Evolution in the public schools?

How hypocritical to declare Intelligent Design as a religious belief—while declaring that evolution is true science—and must be forced upon students as the truth.

Evolution is a religious faith based on miracles that all begin with the word “assume.”

Assume the original primordial mix was these gasses. Assume 1.5×10^{35} power attempts to assemble just one workable protein.

If you can't take that on faith, assume that protein molecules arrived from outer space.

It has never explained the origin of one species.

Precambrian Explosion is unexplainable.

Discovery of DNA and the deciphering of the human genome have revealed the biological engineering of the cell that are the death knell of survival of the fittest.

The preachers of Liberal, secular humanism are fighting to keep intelligent design out of the class room—we should be incensed that evolution is still being taught as acceptable science.

It is exposed as a fraud.

When you can no longer win your arguments, you start calling people names: “If you don't believe in evolution, you are a religious fundamentalist.”

If you refuse to support embryonic-stem-cell research you are a closed minded, religious fanatic, charismatic Christian.

Embryonic stem cell research is another way to devalue human life. Adult stem cells are already curing cancer, diabetes, liver disease, restoring spinal cord injuries, stemming the tide of Alzheimer's when injected directly into brain tissue.

Part of being like Jesus is refusing to be swayed by the preachers of liberal, secular-humanism who are systematically leading people away from the real God—whether they are in Hollywood, on the judicial bench, serving in congress or behind the scenes pushing their evolutionary curriculums in the public school arenas.

Standing fearlessly for the truth is one aspect of becoming like Christ.

SLIDE: There is also the tender, compassionate side of Christ we must not overlook.

As we grow spiritually God works the glorification process within us.

Like the vine and the branches and the fruit of John 15.

Like Christ we will:

Pray more to get our marching orders and to deepen our intimacy with the Father.

Matt 14:23: After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

Be much more diligent in doing the Father's Will

John 6:38: For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

As we pray for the sick, we might even see some miracles occur.

Evangelism: Luke 19:9-10: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

But far and away more critical than what we do is who we become in the process.

Only once in all the Bible did Jesus ever describe His own character. What He said is of great significance.

SLIDE: *Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Compassion: Rich young ruler – turns away,
SLIDE: And Christ, looking upon him, loved him..."

There is a hurting world out there of people who need our love and compassion.
Story of young girl starting the new school year. Not the prettiest, or most outgoing, struggled with social relationships, somewhat left out, ostracized and ridiculed by the other children.
All were passing notes to each other during class. No one even thought to write one to her.
Near the end of class she took out pencil and paper and wrote a note—but she failed to pass it on. She folded it up and put it in her pocket.
After class she took it to an out of the way tree on the play ground and placed in the nook of some branches.
Some girls saw what she did and hurried over to retrieve her note.
They opened it to read these words: "To whoever finds this note, I love you."

Is not that the longing within each of us?

And Jesus, who is gentle and humble in heart, is filled with deep compassion.

SLIDE: HOW DOES GOD LOVE ME? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS.

WRITE ON SLIDE: But God has set his love on us as He foreknew us, predestined us to become like Jesus Christ, called us to faith and repentance, justified us, yes, and has even glorified us, so that one day we look like Jesus.

WHOSE BABY ARE YOU?

SLIDE: Angelina Jolie and her baby, Shiloh

SLIDE: Angie Follett-Barteau and her babies, Chandler and Collie

SLIDE: Jesus and His babies—you and me.