

# Paul's Ponderings – July 2011

## How does that work?

One of the inevitable questions from an inquisitive child can at times, although sometimes in muted fashion for fear of being criticised, be heard ringing round the fringes of the church community - how? I think - maybe because I am at heart a scientist - that it is a perfectly reasonable question.

So how do freewill - the sense I have that I can choose what to think and how to act - and predestination - the sense that God has a plan that he is carefully bringing to fulfilment - actually fit together? This is not, by the way, just a theoretical question that I am posing for the fun of it, but a real line of enquiry about what will be happening, we trust, later this month.

Ephesians chapter 1 is a marvellously uplifting exploration of God's grace and power at work, and what that means for us as Christians. The whole chapter echoes with glory! But it is also stuffed full of the concept of God's plan and purpose, God's choice, and God's fore-knowledge, which can leave a modern, Western, self-referencing mind wondering where "I" fit in! We had, for me, a helpful and enjoyable discussion of these things in a recent evening service, because I firmly believe that we can only respond to this mystery with worship!

So why this topic this month? The simple answer - I chose it! At least, that is what it feels like! But the practical application comes at the end of this month, when an advertisement will appear, asking people who are so inclined to apply for the three vacant "parish priest" jobs at Credenhill, Fownhope and Lugwardine. You see, I believe that God already has a plan - and that in his wisdom he knows who he is calling to come and join us. But what we need is for those people to recognise the possibility of that call; we need the short-listing panel to have God's spirit guiding them; and we need the interviews to lead to the "right" outcome.

It will make a big difference to those parishes to believe that God has called and appointed their clergy. And it will make a big difference to those clergy, to believe as they start their new work that God is behind the move, and is smiling as his plans are worked out! Then we will see in each place the fulfilment of that wonderful phrase from later in Ephesians (2:10)

**"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"**