

The Biblical Doctrine of Predestination

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Foreknowledge of God

In studying the covenant of redemption recorded for us in Rom. 8:28-30 we are told of a people that God foreknew. This is a special and limited aspect of the foreknowledge of God. In future essays we will study at length this special aspect of God's foreknowledge. In this essay we want to consider a broad view of God's foreknowledge.

David in writing about the depth of the knowledge of God declared in Ps. 139:6 "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Who can know or understand the depth or width or height of the knowledge of God. We as creatures cannot attain unto it. Peter declared of Jesus in John 21:17, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee." His disciples said unto him in John 16:30, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things..." Since God knows all things, then he knows all things past, present, and future. The depth of his knowledge boggle our finite minds. David said, "Thou knowest my down sittings and mine uprisings, thou understandest my thought afar off." Thus we are assured that God knows all about us in the very details of our lives. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He even knows our thoughts before we even think them!

The statement of God's knowledge in Heb. 4:12, 13 causes us to fear and marvel all at the same time: "...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The scriptures say that even the thought of foolishness is sin and since God discerns our thoughts and since he knows all about us and nothing can be hidden from him and since all our sins are brought to judgment before God therefore we are made to fear. However, God's foreknowledge is a comfort because when Christ died for our sins, he died for all of our sins. It is God's foreknowledge that enables him to know all of our sins, even before we were born, and laden them upon Jesus to redeem us from our sins.

Next, the foreknowledge of God assures us concerning the security of the physical universe in which we live: Heb. 1:3 reads in part, "...and upholding all things by the word of his power...". God's foreknowledge of all things works hand in hand with his upholding all things by the word of his power. God is never "surprised" or "blind sided" by anything. The harmonic interactions of all the heavenly bodies is testimony of

God's power and foreknowledge assures that we won't be "wiped out" by a passing comet, for instance.

In addition, God's foreknowledge assures us of God's providential blessings and watch care in our lives. Since God knows all things, he knows all our circumstances of life and all about our environment. Matt. 10:29, 30 declare this principle: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And on of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He knows the things we need even before or if we ask him. His foreknowledge assures us that what we ask, he is able to provide. Furthermore, when we are faced with trials or difficulties that seem beyond our ability to handle the fact that God's knowledge far exceeds ours and that his power is unlimited is a great comfort to us.

Also God's foreknowledge is an assurance to us of our salvation and that God's promises will be fulfilled. The following verses testify these principles:

A. Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

B. I Cor. 2:7 - "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

C. Isa. 46:10 - "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

D. Acts 2:23, 24 - "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

E. Acts 4:27, 28 - "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Yes, God knows all of his works and they all will be performed as God purposed. All of his promises are yea and amen. He has saved his people from their sins and their eternal destiny is secured and we are preserved in Christ Jesus. There will be no surprises, slip ups or failures because God knew all things before they ever come to pass. He will do all his pleasure.

The covenant of redemption reads in Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Heretofore we have considered God's foreknowledge of all things. Now let us look at a limited specific aspect of God's foreknowledge, i.e., "whom he did foreknow." The scriptures tell us that God knows all things, therefore he knows all things past, present, and future. Thus he knows about all people who ever have or ever will live on the face of the earth. However, the "foreknow" in the covenant of redemption is not speaking about God knowing about all people, but is speaking about a very specific portion of those who have or will live on the earth.

We read what Jesus said in Matt. 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The Lord told these who were claiming to prophesy in his name, cast out devils, in his name, and to do many wonderful works in his name that he never knew them. This certainly isn't to say that he never had knowledge of them or that he never knew about what they had claimed to have done. But it is teaching us that he never appointed them to do the works they were claiming they had done. Thus the Lord said, "I never knew you."

The Lord knows about all people and all things, though he has not appointed all people and everything that comes to pass. As pertaining to things the scriptures say that "God is not the author of confusion." Certainly he knows about confusion and sin, but he is not the cause of confusion and sin.

Our understanding of how God foreknew a people is illustrated for us in Jere. 1:5 when the Lord said unto Jeremiah, "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." As we have pointed out before God knows about all people but he has only appointed some. God knew Jeremiah before he ever formed him in the belly. God knew him in a special way in that God had appointed him to be a "prophet unto the nations." This appointment took place before Jeremiah had any existence except in the mind and purpose of God. Those that God foreknew in the covenant of redemption are those that God appointed before the world began to be his! Eph. 1:4 reads, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Thus God made choice of a people before the world began to be his.

We close these comments with a quote from I Peter 1:1, 2, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 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."

The Elect of God

Elect on What Basis ? First we will consider on what basis God foreknew or chose a people to be his covenant people.

One idea is that God looked down through the annals of time and saw who would do good or who would accept him or seek after him and thus chose them on that basis. God did indeed look down from heaven, but what he saw is recorded for us in Ps. 14:2, 3 and Ps. 53:2, 3 as follows: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. 14:2, 3) The fact is that because of the total depravity of man there is none that had the capability of doing good or of seeking after God until God imparts a new spiritual nature within in the new birth. Thus we see that of all mankind there was none that understood, or that sought after God or that did good. Thus God's choice of a people could not be on the basis of their understanding and seeking God or of their doing something good.

Furthermore, that God's choice of a people is not of works is further illustrated for us in Rom. 9:9-13, "For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Based on this passage we make the following observations:

- 1. God's choice of Jacob over Esau was according to God's purpose of election.**
- 2. God's election is not based on works, either good or evil.**
- 3. God's choice was made before the children were capable of doing any works.**

Again in Rom. 11:5, 6 we are told that God's choosing of a people is not based on works as follows: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election

of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Thus we are told that God's choice of a people is by grace and not works. Furthermore, we see the impossibility of mixing grace and work in this choice. It is not part grace and part work. It is either all grace or all works and he tells us plainly that it is all grace. Now grace is defined as the "unmerited favor of God." Thus those chosen have done nothing to merit God's choosing them!

Finally we are told in Rom. 9:14-16 that God's choice of a people is not based on man's will (choice) or man's efforts: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." From this passage we draw the following conclusions:

- 1. God's choice of a people manifests God's sovereignty.**
- 2. God's choice of a people is pure and simply mercy and compassion toward them.**
- 3. God's choice of a people is not based on their will or choice.**
- 4. God's choice of a people is not based on their efforts (running).**
- 5. It is not unrighteous for God to make a choice based on his sovereign will.**

In conclusion, God's choice of a people is by grace (unmerited favor) alone. God was under no obligation to choose any one, but he did and we should be extremely thankful that he did.

Elect Given to Christ: Next we will look at how the elect were given to Christ and when and for what purpose they were given to Christ.

First that the Father gave the elect to his Son is evidenced by the following verses of scripture:

A. Matt. 1:21 - "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

B. John 6:37-39 - "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

C. John 10:28, 29 - "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

D. John 17:1, 2 - "...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

E. Heb. 2:13 - "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."

These verses of scripture are sufficient to prove that the Father gave to the Son a people.

Now let us look to when this gift was made. In Eph. 1:4 we read, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This verse teaches us that God made choice of a people to be his before the foundation of the world and gave them to Christ in covenant at that time. These then are the ones that God foreknew in Rom. 8:29.

Next, let us consider for what purposes were the elect given to Christ in covenant before the world began. In looking back at the scriptures we have already quoted we can make the following observations:

A. The elect were given to Christ that "he may save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

B. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all will come to him. (John 6:37)

C. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be "cast out." (John 6:37)

D. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be lost. (John 6:39)

E. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be raised up again at the last day. (John 6:39)

F. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be preserved in Christ Jesus. (John 10:29)

G. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that he give eternal life to all the elect. (John 17:2)

H. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that all the elect should be holy and without blame before God in love. (Eph. 1:4).

In addition, the elect were given to Christ by the Father that:

I.. The elect be adopted into the family of God. (Eph. 1:5)

J. The elect be made accepted by God in Christ. (Eph. 1:6)

K. The elect have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. (Eph. 1:7)

L. The elect obtain an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Eph. 1:11)

M. The elect should be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

In all of the above we see where the Father gave the elect to Christ in covenant for the work that Christ would do on their behalf and thus procure all the blessings reserved for them in the covenant of redemption.

The Biblical Doctrine of Predestination

In our study of the "covenant of redemption" which is set forth in Rom. 8:28-30, the second action of God listed in verse 29 is "predestinate." The five actions of God listed in v. 29 and 30 are foreknow, predestinate, called, justified, and glorified. According to Vines the Greek word "proorizo," which is translated four times into "predestinate," once "ordained before," and once "determined before," means to "mark out or determine beforehand." Thus the English word predestinate means to determine the final destiny beforehand. The four times predestinate is used in the scriptures it is used to denote the final destiny of those that God "foreknew" (Rom. 8:29) or "chose before the world began" (Eph. 1:4). It is never used in connection with anyone other than those whom God foreknew or chose!

We will begin our discussion of God's predestination of the "elect" by considering to what God predestinated them. That is what do the scriptures say is the final destiny of the elect? Rom. 8:29 reads, "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." Now when the verse says we will be "conformed to the image of His Son" it is not saying we will be "clones" of Christ. When Adam brought forth a son he was born in Adams image as Gen. 5:3 reads, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Now Seth was in the image of Adam but was not a clone of Adam. He possessed the same characteristics, qualities, and

nature of Adam (a fallen nature) and thus was in the image of Adam. By nature we are all in the fallen image of Adam. Part of the final destiny of the elect is to be in the image of Christ. To understand what that image is we need to look at the characteristics, qualities, and nature of Christ that is different from our characteristics, qualities, and nature. In Heb. 7:26 we read, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners..." In contrast by nature we are unholy, harmful, defiled, and sinners. Also the scriptures describe God to be "love" (I John 4:8), "a spirit" (John 4:24), and "light" (John 1:4) and this light is defined as eternal life. By nature we are completely selfish, having not the spirit of God, and absent of eternal life. In addition, the Lord is incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and glorious (I Cor. 15). Again, by contrast our natural being is corruptible, mortal, weak and dishonorable.

In contrast to what we are now, our final destiny will see us conformed to the image of Christ. At that time in body, soul, and spirit we will be holy, harmless, undefiled, righteous, love, spiritual, possessed of eternal life, incorruptible, immortal, powerful and glorious. It is in keeping with God's predestination that our final destiny will be conformity with the image of His Son.

Next, we read in Eph. 1:4, 5 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..." Now we are according to birth right in the family of Adam as we are all the off spring of Adam. However, God has declared that those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world will have as a final destiny membership in the family of God. To accomplish this God has predestinated to adopt us into his family by Jesus Christ to himself. Adoption involves taking a person out of one family and placing that person in another family. We will discuss the mechanics of adoption in a later issue. At this point we note that God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children, thus it is our final destiny to be children of God not only in spirit, but also in body.

This brings us to the third thing God has predestinated the elect unto. In Eph. 1:11 we read, "In whom also we (the elect-VJ) have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Thus being the legal heirs of God by spiritual birth, adoption, marriage, and will we have an inheritance from God. In nature, the only lasting inheritance we have is a grave. Yet according to God's predestination we have an eternal inheritance. According to Rom. 8:16, 17 we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of

God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." Thus our final destiny is to be a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we will have by inheritance all that our elder brother has. This is absolutely amazing to consider that we won't be possessors of just a little corner of the glory world, but will be possessors of all that Jesus Christ is a possessor of!

The fact that God purposes, counsels, or wills to do something and then does it is readily apparent from a review of the scriptures:

A. Isa. 46:10, 11 - "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

B. Dan. 4:25 - "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Now this is not to say that we don't sometimes purpose, counsel or will to do something and then try to do according to what we purposed, counseled or willed. The differences between God and us is that God has the nature and abilities to always bring to pass what he has purposed, counseled, or willed, whereas we lack both the nature and the abilities to ensure what we have purposed, counseled, or willed will come to pass.

When God determined the final destiny of those he foreknew beforehand (predestinated) because of his nature and abilities he ensured the elect will reach that final destiny. In this essay we want to consider those things about God that imminently qualify him as the only one who can predestinate.

Many times we attempt to do something but simply lack the power or ability to do it. This is never a problem with God for he has all power in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). This power is demonstrated in the creation of the universe by God simply speaking it into existence. Christ manifested that power by raising the dead, healing all manner of sicknesses, performing all manner of miracles, and manifesting his power over the elements. No force can stand against God or in opposition to God and prevail. By his power God can and will overcome all obstacles that could or would conceivably stand in his way of accomplishing his will.

Other times we make plans, but due to our limited knowledge fail to anticipate obstacles that derail or alter our plans. Since God knows all things past, present, and future there is nothing

that can surprise him. The scriptures say that he knows our thoughts afar off and our down sittings and our uprisings. The hairs of our head are all numbered and a sparrow does not fall without his knowing it. All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Therefore God's purpose, counsel, or will cannot be derailed or altered by unknown past, present, or future happenings.

We as finite creatures are limited in space. We cannot be at more than one place at a time. We may make plans and while we are attending to one problem another may arise at a different place that we are unable to attend to. God has no such limitations. He is everywhere present and no where absent. He is omnipresent and thus able to overcome and perform everything needed to accomplish his purpose at all places and at all times.

Again as finite creatures we are not only limited in space but also in time. Our stay on earth is at best only a very short time and we pass from the scene of this life. Many plans of men have failed to come to fruition because they died before they were finished. God has no such limitations for he is eternal. He has neither beginning or ending. Thus what he purposed, counseled, or willed before the world began, he will still be around to accomplish even until time shall be no more on earth.

Thus based on God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternal existence God is able to accomplish what he purposed, counseled or willed to do. As we will see, based on some things that God is unable to do, his purpose, counsel, and will are definitively assured to God's elect.

The first thing that God cannot do is lie. Titus 1:2 reads, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Likewise, Heb. 6:18 reads, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Thus God's covenant promises stand on the fact that God cannot lie!

The second thing God cannot do is change. Mal. 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Similarly James 1:17 reads, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Thus, since it is impossible for God to change, he cannot change his mind. Those things which he has purposed, counseled, or willed to do will not be altered because God changed his mind. God cannot change!

The third and fourth things God cannot do is fail or be discouraged. This we read about in Isa. 42:4, "He shall not fail

nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth..." Since God cannot fail, we are assured that what God purposes, counsels, or wills to do will be accomplished without failure. If God should ever try to do something and fail, then he would cease being God! Remember, it is impossible for God to fail. Likewise, since God cannot be discouraged, he will never give up or faint at the task. No task is too hard for the Lord. All that he purposes, counsels, or wills will come to pass without failure or discouragement.

The fifth thing God cannot do is deny himself. Paul wrote in II Tim. 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." For God to abandon his promises would be to deny himself. God, however, is faithful to his work and to his promises. He cannot deny himself regardless of what man may do.

The sixth thing God cannot do is be tempted with evil. This is proven by James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." If a person can be tempted to evil, then he can succumb to evil. Since the man who executes God's counsel from a far country is Jesus Christ, he had to be perfect and keep the law perfectly to redeem his people. Thus, God's purpose, counsel, and will were never in danger of failure because Christ could not be tempted with evil. Likewise, the seventh thing God cannot do is sin (I John 3:9). It was impossible for Christ to sin. Therefore our salvation is sure.

The final destiny of God's elect began with God's covenant promises, purposes, counsels, and will before the world began. Because of the nature of God and because of those things God cannot do, that destiny is sure. God has predestinated the elect to it.