

## **“GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE.”**

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**Scripture Texts: Romans 8:29-30**

### **Introduction.**

Our new associate pastor had his ordination exam last Thursday evening before our classis. He passed in flying colors. During it Zac referred to the golden chain of salvation/redemption. That phrase is used to describe these five unbreakable links in God’s working out our salvation.

Those whom God foreknew He predestined.

Those whom God predestined He called.

Those whom God called He justified.

Those whom God justified He glorified.

God is actively invested in and engaged in our lives and our salvation from eternity to eternity. From eternity past (foreknown, predestined) to eternity future (glorified), God is actively ensuring no link in this golden chain breaks, no one falls out.

Before creation a plan was designed by God alone.

During our life on earth His plan was initiated and set in motion.

After our death His plan is fully realized in our glorification.

Here we are given a glimpse into the purposeful, personal work of our God on our behalf to secure our salvation. In these verses we are allowed to see the undeniable design of our salvation.

Romans 8:28 says all things work together for good, for whom? “For those who are called according to his purpose.” This is a massive promise, but who are those? Verses 29-30 answer what that means and how it came to be. We will consider verse 29 this morning.

### **Romans 8:29, God’s Foreknowledge.**

The first link in this eternal chain of salvation is foreknowledge. We all agree God is omniscient. He knows everything. But “foreknowledge” here in Romans 8:29 doesn’t refer to God’s exhaustive knowledge in advance of all men and women, but to His

specific choosing, He clearly says “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

We know how “know” is used in the OT, as when a husband knew his wife, it is an intimate knowledge, in other words, it is love.

Foreknowledge is God taking the initiative to have a personal relationship with those He chooses to love. God set His affection on you and foreknew you for salvation before you existed. It is all of God, salvation belongs to God.

### ***Common objections to God’s foreknowledge.***

Why is it so hard for us to accept this? Because human reason wants to say it was by something God saw in us.

Some say before creation God looked down the long corridors of time and history and He sees you. He sees in you a spark of goodness, a little bit of faith, a hint of interest in God and the things of God, some acts of kindness or other good works. Maybe He even saw that you would make a decision to chose to follow Jesus. Then based on whatever God saw you do or think, He based His decision to choose you on that.

Really? On the day of judgment before the throne of the holy God, are we going to defend ourselves saying, “God, remember you saw something worthy in me, so you chose me.”

There are several answers to this kind of foolish thinking.

***First***, Paul has pounded home from the beginning of Romans we are lost sinners without any hope of salvation. There is none who is righteous, there is none who is good or does good, there is none who fear God, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and the wages of our sin is death, eternal death.

We are not holy and we cannot make ourselves holy and acceptable to God. Not even a little bit, not even if we try really hard for a really long time. It’s hopeless, we are without hope in ourselves.

Where is our hope? Only in the sovereign, eternal purposes of our personal God.

***Second***, the text doesn’t say God chose on the basis of ***what*** He foreknew, but on the basis of ***whom*** He foreknew. The foreknowledge is of persons, not facts or events or

something about them. The action is completely initiated by God out of love, and based on nothing else.

Fore refers to *when* God loved us. Before we existed God initiated a personal relationship with us. In fact, there has never been a time when God did not love those He foreknew.

**Ephesians 1:4** ... he chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

**II Timothy 1:9** [God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

**I Peter 1:1-3** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles ... according to the foreknowledge of God.

Of Abraham God said, "I have chosen him" (Genesis 18:19).  
Of us Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you.

It is God who takes initiative in calling, justifying, sanctified, glorifying.

*Third*, this "down the corridors of time" theory says God learns something which compromises His omniscience. It doesn't say God loves us because we first loved Him. Our faith is not the ground of God's love, but God's love is the ground of our faith.

**I John 9:10, 19** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ... 19 We love because he first loved us.

And where did these corridors of time come from, who created them? Who decided what they would be and who governs over them? And could anything have happened that He didn't know or decide, could anything happen against His purpose and plan from the beginning?

*Finally*, our faith is not ours, it's not something we have that God then foresaw and then predestined us for glory. Faith is the gift of God. Repentance is by the grace of God.

**Ephesians 2:8-9** By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

If God saves me without my works, then He must choose me apart from them, too.

## **Predestination.**

Those whom God chose to know and love, He then predestined, the second link in this eternal golden chain of salvation.

Predestination points to what God intends to do with those whom He foreknew. God begins to put His personal foreknowledge into effect, saving us, and conforming us to the image of Jesus and determining our final destiny.

**Ephesians 1:5, 11** ... In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

We are told what His personal purposes are.

*First*, we are predestined to conformity to Christlikeness. In Christ we are being slowly, progressively changed, renewed, sanctified into the image of Jesus who is the image of God.

Just as God in the beginning created man in His own image, so in our new creation as Christians He creates us in the image of His Son.

**I Corinthians 15:49** Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

**II Corinthians 4:16-17** So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

This conformity will be completed on the day our adoption is finalized and we receive the redemption of our bodies at our glorification. But I must tell you the truth, this process is a painful process. Paul has already told us that.

**Romans 8:17** If children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

It involves inward groaning, it involves “light and momentary troubles” and refining fires. Or to switch metaphors, a sculptor chiseling and chipping away on a rough block of marble through trials and challenges, to reveal Christ’s likeness in us.

We don't like it, we don't want it, but we are chosen so we don't have a choice. We can't be conformed without suffering. But remember the promise.

**Romans 8:18** The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Remember this chain cannot be broken, no matter how difficult the trials are. Glorified is a done deal, it's our destiny.

Paul's purpose in telling us about predestination is to give us deep faith, confidence, assurance and courage in the face of whatever suffering or hardship we are called to endure.

*Second*, we are predestined to be part of the family of Christ, one among many brothers. We are not alone.

*But what about?*

Does this mean we have nothing to do with any of this? Does this mean there is no human agency or responsibility?

Picture the entrance into the Christian life like this. At the entrance is a huge archway, and on the archway is inscribed an open invitation.

Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden.  
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.  
Believe in your heart and confess with your lips Jesus is Lord and you will be saved.  
Repent and believe. Trust and obey. Love God.  
God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

That's the invitation held out to everyone.

After you accept that invitation and enter into the Christian life, you happen to look back over your shoulder and you see words inscribed on the inside of the archway.

Chosen from before the foundation of the world.  
You did not choose me but I chose you.  
All those whom the Father has given me.

Both are equally true, human agency and God's sovereignty. All are invited and later we learn our coming and our faith, our subsequent growth and perseverance are completely the grace of God. He foreknows us and predestines us in a way that doesn't violate our human freedom.

How is this possible, how can two seemingly contradictory truths both be true? Well I will tell you. I don't know. And you say, "what do you mean you don't know, we pay you to know." And I say, the Bible doesn't answer that question so I don't have an answer.

**Deuteronomy 29:29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

We can't go further than Scripture. This is what I do know. All I know is it is true because Scripture says it is true.

God is God, and God isn't worried about what you think or if you think He is unfair or unjust. Scripture destroys our pride, our superior knowledge, our sense of fairness. Predestination is given to us to humble us, to comfort us and to lead us to praise and worship.

Those who hate it the most are those who have refused to submit to the revealed Word of God and acknowledge the sovereign power that creates and sustains and governs all things.

God is God. He is the potter, we are the clay. He is the shepherd, we are the sheep. If you think you are the one who decides your spiritual life, you are the one who meets God half way, you are the one who casts the deciding vote, then you don't know God and you don't know your own heart.

Do you ever have doubts and begin to question whether you are among those foreknown and predestined? Of course you do, so do I. Satan is always trying to stir up doubt, and he especially uses our many sins to do that.

I sometimes try to figure out some reason why God choose me and I come up with nothing. Less than nothing, lots of reason why He shouldn't have. My conscience accuses me, I find no fruit. My faith is weak, I don't know God as I should.

What should we do with those doubts? Cast yourself on Jesus. Come to Him again and again and find rest for your souls. Affirm what you believe about Jesus and then rest in

the confidence that no one can confess and repent and believe without the Holy Spirit, and having the Holy Spirit is proof you are foreknown and foreloved and predestined by God for glory.

This golden chain is the foundation of our assurance, our confidence, our courage, our stability, our worship. God is and will bring to completion the good work He has begun.

We will continue in two weeks the rest of the golden chain.

The fruit of this understanding in our life and mind should be three things. It should fill us with bedrock solid confidence in God; it should fill us with humility in His mercy and grace; and it should fill our hearts with wonder, worship and praise.

**Prayer:** God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Father of glory, thanks you that in your love and goodness alone you freely chose us to salvation before the world began. Give us your Spirit of wisdom and of revelation and enlighten the eyes of our hearts that we might know you and the hope to which you have called us and the riches of our glorious inheritance and the immeasurable greatness of your power toward us who believe. Amen.