

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

FOREKNOWLEDGE
PREDESTINATION
ELECTION

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Doctrines of Grace

- As such we will be covering the following doctrines of grace:
 - The Holiness of God
 - Creation, Fall, and Nature of Man
 - **God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election**
 - The Atonement
 - Regeneration
 - Justification, Faith, and Grace
 - Sanctification
 - The Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints
 - Glorification

Golden Chain of Redemption (or not?)

Romans 8:28–29 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Foreknowledge

- **προγινώσκω (proginosko, verb)** – to know beforehand or in advance, have foreknowledge, to choose beforehand
 - Romans 8:28
- **πρόγνωσις (prognosis, noun)** – foreknowledge, predetermination
 - Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2
- A critical question: *What does foreknowledge mean?*

Foreknowledge

- Romans 8:18-36

Foreknowledge

- Three options for interpreting *foreknowledge* in Romans 8:29 (as far as I know):
 1. Those whom God foreknew were those who God knew before in history, the nation of Israel.
 2. God knows all future events, even how humans will choose based on their own will.
 3. God knows His elect in a salvific manner and predestines them.

Option 1 and Romans 8

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he **foreknew** he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- According to this view, in 29, Paul begins to talk about the people of Israel which God knew before hand
- The argument is that Paul is trying to encourage us by looking back at the people of old that God called

Option 1 and Romans 8

- They point out that all the verbs in 29 are past tense verbs (aorist active indicatives)
- They will say the most basic way of reading foreknowledge is “something known in times past”

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Christians, don't worry we know (from past experience) that God always works out everything for those who love God and are called to follow Him. If you want proof, look at those God previously knew, loved & called in the past, He determined them to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that His Son would become the firstborn of many brethren.

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Leighton Flowers, 06:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aqR23SrHy0>

Option 1 Issue A

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are *called according to his purpose*. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined *he also called*, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- The entire chapter is about the believer all the way through
 - Verses 29-30 would be the only part of this encouragement not about believers
- The called in verse 30 are same as the called in verse 28

Option 1 Issue B

Romans 8:28–30 (ESV)

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

- Verses 12-17 tell us that we have received the Spirit of adoption
- Because we have been adopted in Christ, Christ is our elder brother
- This is not true of the people of Israel before Christ
- This is a clear reference to the adoption language in verses 12-17 which is about believers

Option 1 Issue C

- Romans 11:1–2 (ESV) - 11 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he **foreknew**. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?
- They will look at this verse and say this is the same as in chapter 8
- Let's read Romans 11:1-10

Option 1 Issue C

- If the foreknown in chapter 11 are the same as the foreknown in chapter 8, then why has God rejected them?
 - That really takes away from the whole purpose of chapter 8, doesn't it?
- 2 options here:
 1. Foreknowledge in chapter 11 is referring to the remnant which God had "chosen by grace" which would then be the same as the foreknowledge in Romans 8
 2. Foreknowledge is different from Romans 8 and is *actually* talking about the nation of Israel which God has hardened
- The point Paul is making is that God has not rejected His people Israel, but has kept a remnant

Foreknowledge

- Three options for interpreting *foreknowledge* in Romans 8:29 (as far as I know):
 1. ~~Those whom God foreknew were those who God knew before in history, the nation of Israel.~~
 2. God knows all future events, even how humans will choose based on their own will.
 3. God knows His elect in a salvific manner and predestines them.

Foreknowledge – Noun Verses

- Acts 2:23–24 (ESV) - ²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and **foreknowledge** of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
- 1 Peter 1:1–2 (ESV) - **1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Foreknowledge – Verb Verses

- Acts 26:5 (ESV) - ⁵They **have known** for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.
- 2 Peter 3:17 (ESV) ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, **knowing this beforehand**, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.
- 1 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV) - ²⁰He was **foreknown** before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.
- Romans 11:2 (ESV) - ²God has not rejected his people whom he **foreknew**. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

Examples of Foreknowledge

- Are there any examples of God foreknowing someone in a specific sense?

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Jeremiah 1:4–5 (ESV)

The Call of Jeremiah

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

*⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

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Galatians 1:14–16 (ESV)

14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;

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Foreknowledge of Christ

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- 1 Peter 1:17–21 (ESV)
 - *17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18 knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Foreknowledge of Christ

- Christ was crucified according to the will of God (see Lesson 3 - Creation and Providence Slides)
- Did God just foresee Christ's and His obedience, or was Christ Himself foreknown by God?
- What about the crucifixion?
 - Was that something God foresaw?
 - Was it God's plan?

Thinking through Foreknowledge

- As we consider foreknowledge in Romans 8, we must also consider God's foreknowledge in everything (they are the same conversation)
- Does God bring things about because He foresees that it will happen?
- Or do things come about because of the foreknowledge of God?

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Paragraph 1

God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 2

Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without His providence; yet by the same providence He ordered them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 3

God, in his ordinary providence makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 4

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that His determinate counsel extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also He most wisely and powerfully binds, and otherwise orders and governs, in a manifold dispensation to His most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceeds only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 5

The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does often times leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of His elect is by His appointment, for His glory, and their good.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 6

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin does blind and harden; from them He not only withdraws His grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God uses for the softening of others.

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

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Paragraph 7

As the providence of God does in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it takes care of His church, and disposes of all things to the good thereof.²³

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1689 Baptist London Confession, Chapter 5.

Primary and Secondary Causes

- God is the only primary cause of all things; nothing would happen apart from Him (2LBC; Chapter 5; paragraph 1)
- However, His will is accomplished through secondary causes (2LBC; Chapter 5; paragraph 2)
 - Ephesians 1:11 (ESV) - ¹¹In 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

Which comes first?

- Are things unfolding because God foresaw them or because God has created the ends of this world and the means in which those ends are accomplished?
- Do things in this world unfold on their own or do they happen within the providential care of the Father?
- Do we really believe God feeds even the sparrow (Matthew 6:25-34)?
- Do we really believe that we don't have a pastor right now because it is God's will?
 - Or is it because of disagreements on the search committee?

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Every day, Christians express their commitment to this doctrine. When you bow your head to pray before a meal, you thank God for the food He provided for you. This is an acknowledgment that the good things we enjoy, such as our daily bread, come to us from God. He is the first cause as He upholds, disposes, directs, and governs His creatures and their actions. And yet we know that the food before us does not miraculously appear. It is rather the result of a long series of creaturely actions, beginning with a seed planted in the ground, growth through watering and the nourishment of the soil, harvesting, transportation, and so forth. The delicious salad you enjoy comes to you through many steps, and usually involves many people to bring it to you. And yet you thank God as if He directly provided it to you. And in reality, He did in providence, decreeing in eternity that those plants would produce for your nourishment, upholding their vitality and growth in this world, and sustaining everyone involved in the planting, nourishment, harvesting, and delivery of that food to you. It is quite appropriate to thank Him for the food, while recognizing that the Lord uses providential means to accomplish His decree.

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James H. Renihan, *To the Judicious And Impartial Reader*, Baptist Symbolics Volume 2, p. 154.

What comes first?

- We love these doctrines in good things, but not in the bad things
- When negative or evil happens, we pretend as if God was not provident over that event
- It is a real issue when it comes to sin
 - Did sin enter this world apart from the foreknowledge of God?
 - Did God just foresee sin?
 - Was Christ's death not God's decree?
 - Was sin then part of God's will for the end of this world to bring about the sacrifice of Christ through secondary means?
- These are the questions that I wrestle with

The Mystery of Foreknowledge

- Ultimately, these things are mysterious to us
- I do not have all the answers to your questions
- Where the Bible stops speaking, so do I
- Not all are satisfied with appealing to mystery

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If the only recourse you have to deny the obvious logical entailments of your theological claims is to punt to mystery, feign outrage or accuse your opponents of nefarious intentions/lacking intelligence etc, then you're contributing to the problem, not providing any solutions.

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The Mystery of Foreknowledge

- Every side of this debate is left with questions we cannot answer
- The mystery is what makes this doctrine so difficult
- Ultimately, we have to trust God and not get consumed by the details
- However, this does not mean it is not important, and the debate should not happen
- What you believe about the sinful condition of man and the foreknowledge of God impacts the rest of your soteriology

Foreknowledge in Soteriology

- Does God foreknow that someone will choose Him or does God foreknow them in a salvific sense?
- Your answer to this question determines what predestination and election mean
 - Did Christ die for every individual?
 - Did Christ die for those who we foreknew?