

Subject: *God's Work in Salvation: Foreknowledge*

Scripture: *Romans 8:28-30*

Romans 8 begins with “no condemnation” (8:1) and ends with “no separation” (8:35-39). This is one of the most powerful statements in Scripture on eternal security of the believer. Salvation is a process that God designed, initiated, continues, and completes. When Jesus died on the cross He said, “It is finished,” and when the last soul on earth is saved and the bride of Christ is complete, He will say, “It is finished.”

The Bible teaches that salvation is of the Lord. When the angel announced the birth of Christ in Matthew 1:21, he said “He shall save his people from their sins.” Richard Baxter said: “If God cannot save you, He is not God.” These verses remind us of God’s work in salvation. It unfolds from eternity past and continues to eternity future. God is in control; therefore no part of His plan can fail. He always completes what He chooses to do. Paul describes five things that God does in our salvation. They are like five links in a golden chain that ends in glory.

- 1) God’s people are *foreknown*
- 2) God’s people are *predestined*
- 3) God’s people are *called*
- 4) God’s people are *justified*
- 5) God’s people are *glorified*

In God’s plan, #1 and #2 took place in eternity past, #3 and #4 take place in the believer’s lifetime, and #5 will take place when Christ comes back for us.

In this message we are going to consider what the Bible teaches about God’s foreknowledge. For some this will be a new subject. For some it appears to be a difficult subject. For some of you it is a confusing topic. For some it has been a neglected subject.

I want to remind you that Paul’s epistle to the Romans was written to a local church just like ours. It wasn’t written to a group of students or professors at a Bible college or seminary for them to discuss and debate. It was written to a local church for believers to read, hear, study, and understand. It was written so that believers would be encouraged to worship and serve the God who saves us by His grace.

I’m convinced that Christians are not really in awe of God and deeply grateful for salvation because they do not understand the riches of God’s work in salvation.

1. GOD’S INFINITE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL PEOPLE AND THINGS

God is omniscient. He knows all things about all things. He knows instantly and without effort. He never has to learn anything.

God is never surprised. Has it ever dawned on you that nothing ever dawns on God?
God is never mistaken. God is never confused and He cannot be deceived.
God’s knowledge of everything depends on His control of everything. He knows all things because He controls all things. God’s knowledge is infinite and eternal.

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

All God’s works would include creation and salvation. He designed and completed both.

Psalms 139:1-6 ¹ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. ² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. ³ Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. ⁵ Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

God knows everything about the future. His knowledge is complete and accurate because He controls the future. In the same way God knows everything about our salvation. His knowledge is complete and accurate because He controls the details of our salvation.

2. GOD'S INTIMATE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF HIS PEOPLE

A. God's foreknowledge is definite

Whatever else we may believe or not believe about God's foreknowledge, this much is sure. God is speaking of His people who are going to be saved and glorified. He is not speaking of all people. Another thing is sure...God is the actor and the doer. It is God who foreknew, who predestined, who called, who justified, and who glorified. God is in control of each one and all are in the past tense because they are certain. God not only knows the outcome; He determines the outcome.

Acts 2:22-23 ²² Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

1 Peter 1:1-2 ¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² 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 word "foreknew" is translated "foreordained" in 1 Peter 1:20.

B. Foreknowledge is personal

God's foreknowledge involves people and not just facts. Our text says "whom He did foreknow," not what He did foreknow. These verses refer to God's people, a special people. Look at just a few scriptures about God's knowledge in terms of His relationship with people:

Genesis 18:19 *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

Exodus 33:17 *And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.*

Jeremiah 1:5 *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.*

Amos 3:1-2 ¹ *Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, ² You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

Matthew 7:23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

2 Timothy 2:19 *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

A few chapters later in Romans we find this:

Romans 11:1-2 ¹ *I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.*

God's knowledge in all of these verses means more than just knowing a person or knowing things about a person or a people.

C. God's foreknowledge is eternal

2 Thessalonians 2:13 *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

God foreknew His people in eternity past and set in motion His work of salvation. He knew believers long before they were born, long before Christ died on the cross and rose again, and long before God created the world.

D. God's foreknowledge is unconditional

God's foreknowledge is eternal and therefore it has to be unconditional. It is not based on anything we deserve or anything we do. Let's not forget two things. God knows who His people are and He knows who His people are not.

2 Timothy 2:19 *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Matthew 7:23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Make sure you are one of God's people. Make sure that He knows you. How can you know for sure? Repent of your sins and place your faith where God has placed your sins—on Christ.