

**The 1689 Confession of Faith; Chapter 2 – “Of God and the Holy Trinity”,  
Message # 14 – “God’s Foreknowledge of Christ and Men”, Presented in  
the Adult Sunday School Class by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.**

**I. God’s foreknowledge of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

I want you to be able to see that God’s foreknowledge and His foreordination of all things after the counsel of His own will, go hand in hand. Men are free to make their plans and make their decisions about what they will and won’t do, but God knows them all beforehand, and has foreordained them for His own glory and for the good of all of His people, in relation to what He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.

**Acts 2: 22-24** – “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you miracles, wonders, and signs which God through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

**Acts 4: 27 and 28** – “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”

**Charnock says:** “In the most villainous and unrighteous action that ever was done, God is said to have an influence on it. God is said to deliver up Christ: Acts ii. 23, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”: Acts iv. 28, “For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” Not barely as an act of his prescience, but his counsel, and that determinate, i. e. stable and irreversible. He makes a distinction between these two acts. In God it was an act of counsel, in them an act of wickedness, “by wicked hands”; there was God’s counsel about it, an actual tradition: Rom. viii. 32, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” All the agents had several ends. God in that act aimed at the redemption of the world, Satan at the preventing it, Judas to satisfy his covetousness, the Jews to preserve themselves from the Roman invasion, and out of malice to him for so sharply reprovng them. God had a gracious principle of love to mankind, and acted for the salvation of the world in it; the instruments had base principles and ends, and moved freely in obedience to them.”

**II. God knows all future contingencies –**

**Charnock says:** “That is, God knows all things that shall accidentally happen, or, as we say, by chance; and he knows all the free motions of men’s wills that shall be to the end of the world. If all things be open to him, Hebrews 4:13, then all contingencies are, for they are in the number of things; and as, according to Christ’s speech, those things that are impossible to man, are possible to God, so those things which are unknown to man, are known to God, because of the infinite fulness and perfection of the divine understanding.”

**The whole subject of prophecy rests upon God’s communicating to men His knowledge of future events; events which He has foreknown and foreordained.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 18: 1-27** – “Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab. After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, “Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?” And he answered him, “I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war.” Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD

today." Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" So they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand." But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?" So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!" Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!" The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.' " And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand." Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement." And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak." Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" And he said, "Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!" So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left." And the LORD said, "Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?" "So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner." "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.'" "The LORD said to him, 'In what way?'" "So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.'" "And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him and also prevail; go out and do so.'" "Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you." "Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?" "And Micaiah said, 'Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!' " "Then the king of Israel said, 'Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; and say, 'Thus says the king: 'Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I return in peace.'" "But Micaiah said, 'If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.'" "And he said, 'Take heed, all you people!"

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 18: 30-34** – "Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.'" "So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'It is the king of Israel!'" "Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from him." "For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him." "Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor." "So he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.'" "The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died."

### **III. The Freedom of man is not hindered by God's Foreknowledge:**

**Isaiah 45: 11** – "Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons; and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me." "I have made the earth, and created man on it." "It was I – My hands that stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded." "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; He shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward, says the Lord of hosts."

**John Gill says:** "I have raised him up in righteousness,.... Though this may be said with some respect to Cyrus, yet chiefly to Christ, of whom Cyrus was a type; him the Lord appointed and determined to be the Saviour and Redeemer of his people; him he sent forth in time for that purpose, in righteousness or faithfulness to concerning him: or, "unto righteousness" (s), as the Vulgate Latin version; to bring in an everlasting righteousness for the justification of his people: or, "with righteousness", as the Septuagint version is (t): I have raised him up a King with righteousness; a righteous King, a King that reigns in righteousness, as Christ does, and better agrees with him than Cyrus; see Jeremiah 23: 5, and I will direct all his ways; or "make them plain" (u); remove all difficulties and obstructions out of his way; he shall succeed and prosper, as the "pleasure of the Lord did prosper" in the hands of Christ; God being at his right hand as man and Mediator, to direct, counsel, and assist him, and to make him successful: he shall build my city; not Cyrus, for he did not build the city of Jerusalem, whatever orders he might give for it, Isaiah 44: 28 though his proclamation only mentions the temple, Ezra 1: 2, but Christ, the builder of the church, often compared to a city, and called the city of God, of which the saints are fellow citizens; and which is built by Christ, upon himself the Rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, Matthew 16: 18, and he shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts; the Lord's people are captives to sin, Satan, and the law; Christ has not only redeemed these captives, but has proclaimed liberty to them, and delivered them from their bondage by his Spirit and grace; and all this freely, not through any merits of theirs, but of his own rich grace and mercy; and though they are redeemed with a price; yet not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and whatever their redemption and freedom cost him, it costs them nothing, it is to them without money and without price."

**Charnock says** – "God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions doth not necessitate the will of man. It is certain all necessity doth not take away liberty; indeed, a compulsive necessity takes away liberty, but a necessity of immutability removes not liberty from God. Why should then a necessity of infallibility in God remove liberty from the creature? God did not only know that we should do such actions, but that we should do them freely; he foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that. God did not foreknow the actions of men as necessary but as free; so that liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge than removed. That God doth foreknow everything, and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain; but how fully to reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man."

**Isaiah 44: 26-28** – "Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers; who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' to the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' and I will raise up her waste places; who says to the deep, 'Be dry!' "And I will dry up your rivers'; Who says of Cyrus, His is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built", and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

**Charnock says again:** It is therefore certain that God doth foreknow the free and voluntary acts of man. How could he else order his people to ask of him things to come,' in order to their deliverance, such things as depend upon the will of man, if he foreknew not the motions of their will, Isaiah 45: 11. [1.] Actions good or indifferent depending upon the liberty of man's will as much as any whatsoever. Several of these he hath foretold; not only a person to build up Jerusalem was predicted by him, but the name of that person, Cyrus, Isa. 44: 28. What is more contingent, or is more the effect of the liberty of man's will, than the names of their children? Was not the destruction of the Babylonish empire foretold, which Cyrus under took, not by any compulsion, but by a free inclination and resolve of his own will? And was not the dismissal of the Jews into their own country a voluntary act in that conqueror? If you consider the liberty of man's will, might not Cyrus as well have continued their yoke as have struck off their chains, and kept them captive as well as dismissed them? Had it not been for his own interest rather to have strengthened the fetters of so turbulent a people, who, being tenacious of their religion and laws, different from that professed by the whole world, were like to make disturbances more when they were linked in a body in their own country, than when they were transplanted and scattered into the several parts of his empire? It was in the power of Cyrus (take him as a man) to choose one or the other. His

interest invited him to continue their captivity rather than grant their deliverance, yet God knew that he would willingly do this rather than the other ; he knew this which depended upon the will of Cyrus ; and why may not an infinite God foreknow the free acts of all men, as well as of one? If the liberty of Cyrus's will was no hindrance to God's certain and infallible foreknowledge of it, how can the contingency of any other thing be a hindrance to him? For there is the same reason of one and all ; and his government extends to every village, every family, every person, as well as to kingdoms and nations.

So God foretold by his prophet, not only the destruction of Jeroboam's altar, but the name of the person that should be the instrument of it, 1 Kings 13: 2, and this about three hundred years before Josiah's birth. It is a wonder that none of the pious kings of Judah, in detestation of idolatry, and hopes to recover again the kingdom of Israel, had in all that space named one of their sons by that name of Josiah, in hopes that that prophecy should be accomplished by him ; that Manasseh only should do this, who was the greatest imitator of Jeroboam's idolatry among all the Jewish kings, and indeed went beyond them, and had no mind to destroy in another kingdom what he propagated in his own. What is freer than the imposition of a name ? Yet this he foreknew, and this Josiah was Manasseh's son, 2 Kings 21: 26. Was there anything more voluntary than for Pharaoh to honour the butler by restoring him to his place, and punish the baker by hanging him on a gibbet? Yet this was foretold, Genesis 40: 8. And were not all the voluntary acts of men, which were the means of Joseph's advancement, foreknown by God, as well as his exaltation, which was the end he aimed at by those means ? Many of these may be reckoned up. Can all the free acts of man surmount the infinite capacity of the divine understanding ? If God singles out one voluntary action in man as contingent as any, and lying among a vast number of other designs and resolutions, both antecedent and subsequent, why should he not know the whole mass of men's thoughts and actions, and pierce into all that the liberty of man's will can effect? Why should he not know every grain, as well as one that lies in the midst of many of the same kind?"