

“Foreknowledge and Predestination”  
Romans 8:29  
(Preached at Trinity, June 14, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 8** Paul has directed our focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times in this chapter. The Christian life is distinct because of the indwelling Spirit.  
**Romans 8:5** – “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”
2. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the confidence of our adoption enabling us to cry out “Abba Father.”  
It is the Holy Spirit that keeps us pressing on in spite of our suffering. He keeps our eyes directed towards the hope of glory.  
It is the Holy Spirit that fuels our prayer life interceding and instructing us how we should pray even when we don’t know what we should pray.
3. All of these things give us great assurance as we press on in our Christian journey. Last time we focused on **Verse 28** which begins, “And we know that”  
This we know:  
If God has called us according to His purpose then He most certainly has a purpose and He has a place in His purpose for us and that He is working everything for our good in achieving that purpose.
4. We saw that God’s chief purpose is to conform His people to the image of Christ. He is working all things to accomplish this end. This is God’s eternal purpose.
5. As we continue with **Verses 29-30** Paul describes God’s eternal purpose more fully.  
**Verse 29** is one of the most avoided verses in the Bible. The Book of Romans has several such verses. **Verse 29** contains the notorious “P” word.  
In the English language there are several words that are not used in the interest of political and social correctness and are considered so heinous that if they must be referred to only the first letter is used.  
In most pulpits the word “predestination” has acquired such status.
6. In **Verses 29-30** there are five words used that are essential in understanding what God has done in the redemption of His people:  
Foreknowledge, Predestination, Effectual Calling, Justification, and Glorification.
7. This morning I want to direct your attention to the first two – Foreknowledge and Predestination.

- I. Before you can understand God's foreknowledge you have to understand His knowledge  
God is Omniscient - God has Infinite Knowledge
- A. God knows every detail of His creation
1. God knows the vastness of the heavens – He made them
  2. God knows the precise number of sand particles
  3. God knows the weight of Mount Everest, the gallons of water in the sea
  4. God knows the potential amount of rainfall if all the clouds gave up their moisture at one time.
  5. God knows the precise number of fish in the ocean
  6. There are currently 6 billion people on earth but God knows what each one is doing - right now. He knows what each one is thinking – right now
- B. God's knowledge of all things has existed from eternity  
God has always known all that He knows  
**Acts 15:18** – "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"
1. God knows all things at once, He sees all things at once  
We can only think in a linear fashion – one thought following another.  
God knows all things at once.
  2. God's knowledge has been forever with Him. In other words, God does not learn. He cannot be taught. He cannot increase in knowledge.
- C. God's mind is full of secret things He does not reveal to men  
**Deuteronomy 29:29** – "The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we may do* all the words of this law."
1. God knows the cure for cancer
  2. God knows every solution for every problem of man
  3. God knows every potential cause and effect, every detail of an infinite number of possibilities  
What if you had never been born? Hitler? Thomas Edison?
- D. God knows every detail with regards to history past present and future
1. In terms of the past it is called God's **remembrance**
    - a. God knows every detail of every event that has happened in eternity past – He never forgets.
    - b. He remembers the details of the fall of Satan
    - c. In the day of judgment all will be brought to God's remembrance  
**Matthew 12:36** – "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."  
**Hosea 7:2** – "And they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.
  2. In terms of the **future** it is called "foreknowledge or prescience"  
**Acts 15:18** – "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."  
    - a. It should be pointed out that things do not happen because God knows them but because He has decreed them – He has willed them to come to pass

- b. God has foreknowledge of the precise number of those who will be saved

**1 Peter 1:2** – “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.”

**Romans 8:29-30** – “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. <sup>30</sup> 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.”

3. There is nothing about the future that God does not know
1. There is a modern heresy known as *open theism*. According to open theists, God is ignorant of future events. God does not know in advance the future free actions of his moral creatures; that tragic events occur through which God has neither control nor purpose
  2. This heresy diminishes the sovereignty of God, denies His omniscience, and destroys His foreknowledge. It paints Him as a God who has no control over His creation.
  3. It destroys the God’s infinity by confining Him in the space of our existence.  
**Isaiah 46:9-10** – “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 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:”

II. God’s foreknowledge is more than just looking into the future at events unfolding without design. God’s foreknowledge is God’s foreknowledge of every event that He has ordained.

- A. Foreknowledge implies fixity
1. If God looks into the future and sees an event it is implied that that event is fixed in time.
  2. If God looked into the future before time began, before the world was created, then it implies that the future was pre-determined. Who determined it?  
Robert Haldane – “God foreknows what will be, by determining what shall be.”
- B. This brings us to the subject of predestination
1. Many have wrestled hard with this verse to make it fit their Arminian theology. Since foreknowledge comes before predestination in this passage doesn’t it imply that God looked into the future and saw those who would receive the Gospel by faith and then predestinated them to salvation?  
The answer is a resounding NO!

2. Predestination is not based upon foreknowledge. It is based upon God's predeterminate will.
  - a. The word for predestinate is *proori*, zw from two words meaning to determine before.
  - b. It makes sense that God's foreknowledge came before His determinate counsel. God would have to foreknow a person before he could predetermine him to do something.
  - c. **Verse 29** is not describing God's foreknowledge of what some people would do. It isn't talking about actions at all! It is talking about God's foreknowledge of particular people and what He has done for them.
  
3. Scripture will not allow the position that predestination is based upon God's foreknowledge of faith.
  - a. First, because Scripture declares that when God looked from eternity He saw NO faith  
**Psalm 14:2-3** – “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. <sup>3</sup> They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.”
  - b. Second, Scripture teaches that a man left to himself will never come to Christ.  
**Romans 8:7** – “Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”  
**John 6:65** – “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”  
 Apart from regeneration no man will seek Christ.
  - c. Third, of the three times the word foreknowledge (*proginw*, skw) is used as referring to God's foreknowledge, it speaks of the foreknowledge of people, not actions.  
**1 Peter 1:20** – “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”  
*(Speaking of the person of Jesus Christ)*  
**Romans 11:2** – “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.”  
*(Speaking of the people of Israel)*  
**Romans 8:29** – “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.”  
*(Speaking of the elect – not their actions)*

- d. Finally, the entire context of this passage speaks of God's personal intimate working in the lives of His people  
**Verse 28** – God is working for the good of those He called  
**Verse 29** – He foreknew them personally  
     He predestined them personally to holiness  
**Verse 30** – He called them particularly to believe  
     He justified them unto righteousness  
     He will sustain them to glorification  
     This is God's purpose for His people!!
- 4. If foreknowledge only points to what God knows about the actions of people then surely He foreknew those who would not believe and thus condemn themselves to hell. If God's foreknowledge is simply the foreknowledge of actions then why did God create those He knew would be lost and go to hell?
- C. Foreknowledge and Predestination describes the how of **Verse 28**
  - 1. God says He is working for the good of the people He has called according to His purpose.
    - a. What is His purpose? Is it not to save a multitude for Himself, to reconcile them and make them holy?
    - b. **Verse 29** tells us that God looked upon the fallen race of humanity and out of His infinite grace and mercy chose some unto salvation.
    - c. **Verses 30** to the end of the chapter tells us that God by His mighty power is accomplishing His purpose.

### III. Arguments against predestination

- A. It is unfair – it makes God a tyrant or worse, a monster
  - 1. What does justice demand? Does not God's justice demand that we all go to hell?
  - 2. What is unfair about God's choosing to save a multitude of men by His great mercy? He is not obligated to save a single one.  
 If God chose to save just one wretched sinner He would be most merciful and kind. That God has chosen to save a multitude is a sign of His great mercy and grace.  
 Paul writes, "That he might be the firstborn among many brethren."
  - 3. If I go to an orphanage and choose a boy and a girl to adopt and make them an heir of my estate would I not be praised for my kindness? Would I be condemned for not adopting all of the children?
- B. Predestination infringes upon the free will of man
  - 1. We've already seen that no man left to himself will choose God  
**Romans 3:10-11** – "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: <sup>11</sup> There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."
  - 2. Salvation does not take away freedom. It restores freedom. It enables a man to return to his Creator. Salvation demands that God do something powerfully upon the heart of man. We must be recreated.  
**2 Corinthians 5:17** – "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

C. Predestination will destroy evangelism

1. God has not only determined the salvation of His people but also the means by which they will be saved. His means is the faithful witness of the Gospel by His people.
2. If God has decreed the power of the Gospel in salvation does that not send us forth with boldness and confidence? Contrast that with the believer who has no confidence that *any* will be saved.
3. And hasn't God commanded us to go, to evangelize? Do we not desire to obey Him?

Conclusion:

1. The glorious thing about our salvation is it's all of God. As Jonah proclaimed, "Salvation *is* of the LORD." He has ordained it and accomplished it for His own glory.
2. The only cause of our salvation is God. This knowledge humbles us and fills us with gratitude and praise.
3. God is accomplishing His purpose. He is saving His own. He has saved us to the end that we might worship Him. Our salvation is God's purpose realized.  
What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. In our salvation we are brought to see Him as most glorious. This should cause us to see ourselves as eternal debtors and to bow before Him in worship and adoration, now and forever.

Robert Murray McCheyne:

"When I stand before the throne,  
Dressed in beauty not my own,  
When I see thee as thou art,  
Love thee with unsinning heart,  
Then, Lord, I shall fully know--  
Not till then--how much I owe.