



Lesson 7: The Foreknowledge and Predestination of Believers

Theme: Our study seeks to understand how these words *foreknowledge* and *predestination* are used to describe our salvation before time.

Outline of our study:

1. Romans 8:28-30
2. Concept of foreknowledge
3. Ephesians 1:3-11
4. Concept of predestination
5. Practical meaning for our lives

Romans 8:29-30



Foreknowledge Defined

What does it mean that God *foreknew* us?

1. Sometimes the word is used in the sense of *to know beforehand*, cf. Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17.
2. Based upon the word *know* when used of God knowing individuals, the meaning is *intimate* beyond mere cognition.

Old Testament usage of *know* when used of God as in Genesis 18:19; Exodus 2:25; Psalm 1:6; 144:3; Jeremiah 1:5; Hosea 13:5; Amos 3:2 and New Testament verses in Matthew 7:23; 1 Cor. 8:3; Galatians 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:19; and 1 John 3:1. The word *know* has the meaning of *love, to set regard upon, to know with peculiar interest, delight, affection*.

See Salvation, Charles Horne, p. 20; Romans: International Commentary on the New Testament, John Murray, pgs. 315-318; The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation, Bruce Demarest, p. 128; Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented: David Steele, Curtis Thomas, S. Lance Quinn, second edition, pgs. 157-168.

William’s New Testament translation:

Romans 8:29 “For those on whom he set his heart beforehand He marked off (predestined) as His own to be made like His Son.” Literally *fore-knew* means *set his heart upon*.

Observations of Romans 8:29-30:

- God *foreknew* persons not their actions.
- God *foreknew* individuals not just Israel or the church – corporate election.

This is a special knowledge of His own. He knows all things and all people in the sense of mere *knowledge*, but in the sense of a *special affection/love/experiential affection*, he only knows His own in this way.

Some argue that God foresaw people who would believe in Him and then He chose them on the basis of their faith. But the issue is raised: *Where did they get the faith to believe?*

Faith is seen as a divine gift given by God; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29.

- God’s foreknowledge of his own is the first of five certainties about those whom God saves: 8:29-30.

Foreknown: aorist tense – meaning “completed action”

Predestined: aorist tense

Called: aorist tense

Justified: aorist tense

Glorified: aorist tense

The aorist tense sees an action as being done!

All these aspects of salvation are completed in the mind of God in regards to His children.

Examples of foreknowledge as special love:

- He *knew* his wife; speaking of conjugal love, Genesis 4.
- God knew Israel with a special affection; Amos 3:2; Deut. 7:7-8.
- God knew Jeremiah in a special way even in the womb; Jeremiah 1:5.
- Abraham; Genesis 18:19
- The righteous; Psalm 1:6; 144:3.
- Jesus knows what the unbeliever has done but does not know them as His own; Matthew 7:22-23.
- The Lord knows those who are His; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 3:1.

Faith cannot be before *foreknowledge*, because foreknowledge is before predestination, and faith is the effect of predestination.

In summary John Stott says,

“...the Hebrew verb ‘to know’ expresses much more than mere intellectual cognition; it denotes a personal relationship of care and affection. Thus, when God ‘knows’ people, he watches over them (Ps. 1:6; 144:3), and that he cared for them (Hosea 13:5). Indeed, Israel was the only people out of all the families of the earth whom Yahweh had

‘known,’ that is, loved, chosen and formed a covenant with (Amos 3:2). The meaning of ‘foreknowledge’ in the New Testament is similar. ‘God did not reject his people (Israel), whom he foreknew’, that is, whom he loved and chose (Romans 11:2). . . .

John Murray writes: ‘Know’ . . . is used in a sense practically synonymous with ‘love’ . . . ‘Whom he foreknew’ . . . is therefore virtually equivalent to ‘whom he fore loved’” (Romans, Stott, p. 249).

Predestination

Romans 8:29 “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. . . .”

v. 30 “and these whom he predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

Ephesians 1:4b-6 “In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

v. 11 “also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to **His purpose** (prothesin) who works all things after the **counsel** (Boulen) of the **will** (thelematos) of him. . . .”

Romans 8:28 “. . . who are called according to His purpose.”

1. God has a plan that the members of the Trinity chose from eternity. The plan or His divine decree is working out His purposes in all things. God’s people are comforted to know they have become a part of this divine plan through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. Predestination Defined:

Predestination is made of two parts in the Greek language: pro meaning *in front, before* and horizo meaning to ordain or determine. In the New Testament it is used of God alone.

Scriptures: Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11.

Theological definition: “We define predestination as that theological doctrine, primarily associated with Calvinism, which holds that from

eternity God has foreordained all things which come to pass, including the final salvation or reprobation of man.”

(Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, article on “Predestination” by Loraine Boettner, p. 415).

I take exception to the idea that the “lost” were predestined. No place in scripture are the lost said to be “predestined to hell.” If God does nothing, sinners will be lost. The grace of God is what comes to the rescue by:

Loving us before time: foreknowledge

Predestine: a plan to save us—boundaries set

Our calling, justification, and glorification: all planned by God before time

3. The goals of predestination:

- Romans 8:29 – conform us to the image of Christ
- Ephesians 1:5 – see that we are adopted in the family of God
- Romans 8:28 – see that the purpose of God is carried out in our lives

4. God has determined ends and means.

God has determined to save sinners.

God’s determined means for saving sinners is the Gospel of Jesus Christ shared by faithful witnesses: Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16-17.

5. The effects of believing that God is in charge from eternity past to right now:

- Humbles the heart and should make us burst with praise to God for saving us: Ephesians 1:3-14—to the praise of His glory.
- Should produce confidence that there is a plan and purpose for your life that began in eternity past; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 2:10.
- These truths should never produce apathy, fatalism, or a “whatever will be, will be” attitude in us.

- These truths should be sacred truths shared with members of God’s family.
God’s people have been hated, hunted, killed, and despised in this world. Jesus said that all men would hate His followers like they hated Him. In the midst of all this rejection, God kept telling Israel and keeps telling the Church, “You are special to me. You are no accident. I have been loving you before the stars existed.”
- Never let these truths be an excuse to not evangelize. See 2 Timothy 2:10. We should be emboldened to share the gospel knowing God has people He is going to save in this world just like He saved us.

Next Week Lesson 8: God’s Salvation Applied in Time: God’s Grace and Our Calling to Salvation!



Break Out Session – Lesson 7

Group Discussion Background

In each of our break out sessions we will probe three aspects of the truths presented during each class through a series of discussion questions as described below.

WHAT: What is the key informational content?

SO WHAT: What is the implication of this information? Or said another way, why is the truth of this information important?

WHAT NOW: How will you apply this truth or what will you do now that you know this truth?

Our goal for these classes is not simply to increase our knowledge, but for lives to be transformed by truth. (Romans 12:2)

Discussion Questions: (25 minutes)

Ask the group the following questions and allow the group to thoroughly explore and discuss each one.

1. What is meant when the theological term foreknowledge is used?
2. What is meant when the theological term predestination is used?
3. According to Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Jeremiah 1:5; and 2 Timothy 2:19, how is the foreknowledge of God more than just mere knowledge? How is the word “know” used in Matthew 7:22-23?
4. When you think of God calling you and foreknowing and predestining you before the foundation of the world, according to Romans 8:28-31, how should this affect how we should look at life?
5. According to Romans 8:28-29 and Ephesians 1:5 what are the goals of God’s predestined plan for our lives? How will these truths exclude human boasting, your confidence that there is a plan and purpose for your life and your need to evangelize our world?

Time to Care – Share – Bear (15 minutes)

During this time, the group is encouraged to share in each other’s lives and demonstrate care for one another by bearing one another up through prayer.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Answer any remaining questions and clarify the homework for the following week.



Lesson 7 Homework

1. Read Grudem pgs. 67-72.
2. Answer question “1” and “4” on page 71.

Question 1:

Can you remember the first time you heard the gospel and responded to it?
Can you describe what it felt like in your heart?

Do you think the Holy Spirit was working to make that gospel call effective in your life? Did you resist it at the time?

Question 4:

Do you understand the elements of the gospel call clearly enough to present them to others? Could you easily turn in the Bible to find four or five appropriate verses that would explain the gospel call clearly to people?

3. Write out a gospel presentation you would give to someone you are trying to lead to Christ!
4. Define “grace” and give one verse that attributes our salvation to the grace of God!