

10 Minutes on the Saving Foreknowledge of God

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Date: 04 April 2025

Preacher: Chris Oswald

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

This might be a short podcast. I only have one simple aim, and that is to clear up one particular misunderstanding of the word foreknown as it appears in a number of passages in the New Testament.

The errant view, the false view, has to do with taking words like foreknowledge or predestined or he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

It takes those words to mean that God looked down through history, through the tunnel of history, and saw that we would choose him, and that's what it means by foreknowledge, that God saw that we would choose him, and that's what that word means.

[2 : 08] But that's not what that word means. So the Greek word here is the word that we use in English for prognostication. It's the combination of pro, which is before, and a version of the Greek word for knowledge, gnosis.

And so that's where we get prognostication. It's the person who sees beforehand, and that's the Greek word that we have in all these texts related to the foreknowledge of God.

One common verse that gets cited quite a bit to discuss this issue is Romans 8.29, where it says, For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined.

The key word here in this text is whom. Whom, referring to persons, not what, referring to actions. It's not that God looked down through the tunnel of history to see what people would do, but he looks down through the tunnel of history and sees particular people in a unique way.

God doesn't predestine people based on a preview of their future faith or obedience. He foreknew them, and on the foundation of his sovereign love, he chose them.

[3 : 21] One way to illustrate this would be to go back to a use of this concept in Amos in the Old Testament, in Amos 3.2, where God says of Israel, You only have I known of all the families of the earth.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Now, we need to clarify that this is not saying that God lacks information about other nations, because we have plenty of verses that say exactly the opposite of that.

God knows all the nations. He knows all the people. So it's not that when God says, You only have I known of all the families of the earth, does he mean that he had some kind of unique insight into Israel.

It doesn't mean either that he could see that they would choose him, because that's actually just consistently untrue throughout the history of Israel. So rather, this sense is that he knew them in a covenantal way, not unlike the way that the Bible talks about union between a man and a woman being he knew her.

It's a covenantal love kind of meaning. It's a choosing, and it's an initiating upon. God's knowing, in this sense, his foreknowledge consistently includes the idea of love and relationship and divine purpose, not just an awareness of the facts.

[4 : 49] This becomes even more apparent when we look at 1 Peter 1.20. This verse speaks of Christ being foreknown before the foundation of the world. And you wouldn't be thinking there that the Father somehow knew Jesus.

That's not the point. The point isn't even to look down and see what Jesus would do. The point is that Jesus was chosen. That's what this word foreknown means. It has a choosing sense to it.

Christ being foreknown in this verse in 1 Peter 1.20 speaks to the Father's eternal purpose and loving ordination of the Son. It's the choosing of the Son, the anointing of the Son.

That's what our word Christ means. The same principle applies to believers. To be foreknown is to be foreloved and foreordained for grace.

It's not about being foreseen as somehow deserving or meriting that grace. That's the Arminian perspective. That's the wrong perspective. That view misunderstands the nature of divine foreknowledge.

[6 : 01] And it unintentionally makes God's love contingent on human action, right? Because if what foreknowing really means is that God's looking down and seeing what we do and then responding to that, then he is actually responding to us and not us to him.

And that's why I was thinking about this, because the verse that Dove talked about on Sunday was Jesus saying, I have chosen you, you've not chosen me. So that's what the word means.

This false sense of God looking at what we would do, it shifts the cause of salvation from God's mercy to man's merit, really.

It shifts the cause of salvation from God's mercy to man's merit. It makes God the reactor rather than the initiator. And it really reverses the order presented in Romans 9.16, where it says, So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who has mercy.

True biblical foreknowledge, as presented here, affirms that God's love is not reactive but initiating, not earned but free, not based on conditions within us, but flowing from his own glorious purpose and will.

[7 : 14] This aligns very well with what 1 John 4.19 says, We love him because he first loved us. And you know, a really big, important idea that I just think we don't talk about enough is that God has this plan to save the world.

And that plan involves destroying his enemies. But the way that he has chosen through his mercy to destroy many of his enemies is to convert them from enemies into children.

And that transition from enemy to child, talked about in Romans 5, that's all about God doing something for us when we had no interest in him doing it.

That's why this Arminian view that God is just looking at what we would choose is so problematic. It kind of ruins the gospel. Romans 8.29, as we've already discussed, those whom he foreknew, the idea is that he's loving them in a covenantal sense, just like we saw in Amos 3.2.

It's relational, not observational. Romans 11.2, it says, God has not rejected the people whom he foreknew. Again, it's not God responding to us.

[8 : 32] It's God initiating. 1 Peter 1.1-2 talks about the elect, the chosen in Christ, according to the foreknowledge of the Father.

This is an emphasis on people being chosen by God, not being foreseen, not their faith being foreseen, or their future obedience foreseen, and so on and so forth.

So that's the idea. And like I said, I thought this was going to be a really short podcast. I was putting it at 10 minutes. It looks like it's only about nine. The whole idea is to just correct this error that sometimes floats around there, that when you encounter these words, and they're all over the Bible, they're all over the New Testament, foreknowledge, predestined, election, and so forth.

That is not God looking down through the tunnel of time and saying, oh, Chris is going to believe in me one day, therefore I know him. No, he's saying Chris doesn't believe in me.

He would never believe in me unless I woke him up with the Holy Spirit and brought him into life out of darkness and out of death. And that's what the word foreknowledge actually means.

[9 : 38] So there you go. That's all I got. It's a real short one. We have time to play the outro, as they say, in the professional podcasting circles that I so clearly run in.

guitar solo Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.