

The Doctrine of Foreknowledge

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[0:00] I need to understand that with this passage comes some controversy, I just put it that way. I need to understand that a lot of confusion about it, really, from my perspective, is very simple. So we're going to spend some time on these few verses, probably several Sundays, as we look at it and kind of take it step by step. So the view is going to be broader than just verse 28. And that's right, because Paul intended to be much more broad than just simply the simple statement that all things work together for good. Because, you know, as I mentioned last week, Romans 28, 828, has been so abused and misapplied, misused.

[1:12] So much so that it, in some respects, has been rendered almost useless, meaningless. Because it's been made to apply to things it was never intended to apply to.

And the reason why that has happened can be explained by our tendency to take a scripture out of its context and make it apply to whatever makes us feel better, feel good.

We have to be very careful about that, especially with verses like Romans 828. The truth of the matter is, as I mentioned last week, it's even much better than we think.

And I think we're going to begin to discover that tonight. Romans 828 is part of a larger text. It's just one verse in what we might call a paragraph, and rightfully so.

So there's a bigger theme here, bigger idea, than just the isolated events that take place in life, that God's working for good. All right?

[2:18] It's much broader than that. And we know that, that the truth of Romans 828 is part of something larger, something bigger. We know that because of the words or conjunctions that appear at the beginning of verses 29 and 30.

It's important for us to see this. And when you study scripture, you really do need to pay close attention, not just simply to each individual word, but especially key connecting words.

Like, for example, there in verse 29, the word for. Now, I have, in the recent past, made a lot about the word for, and rightfully so.

The word for is functioning here as a conjunction, and it links us with something. And also the word moreover that appears there at the beginning of verse 30.

Now, if you have a New American Standard Bible or ESV, I believe, you might have the word and. All right? So, moreover or and. Those two words.

[3:31] For, that comes at the beginning of verse 28, or 29, rather. And moreover, that appears there at the beginning of verse 30. These words link us, link all of these verses together.

That's why they're so important. Now, the best way to organize Paul's thoughts here in this passage might be to see specifically how these conjunctions function.

All right? What they're intended to do here. Because, see, Paul's thoughts here are very logical. Really, it's not complicated. Very logical. Albeit, deeply theological.

And I think you would agree with me about that. Now, the conjunction for. Let's just take these two and see how they link and what they link us to. The conjunction for of verse 29 links us to the word good in verse 28.

I kind of muffed that a little bit. The conjunction for. For. In verse 29 links us with the word good in verse 28. And I somewhat made this point last last Sunday night.

[4:48] And so we understand what the good is. And what is the good. Is anything that God would use to conform us to the image of his son. That's what he says in verse 29.

So the word for links those two things together. And by the way, God uses all things. All things to conform us.

Ultimately conform us to the image of his son. That's the good of which he speaks. And so all the isolated events take place in life. That some of which we cannot make any sense of. And some of them tend to defeat us.

And we can allow to defeat us. All of these things. All of these things. God is working together. For our good. And that good is defined in verse 29.

To conform us to the image of his son. To make us more like Jesus. So you see how the conjunction for links us to that. And so therefore we understand what the good is. And we also understand what the good does.

[5 : 49] Accomplishes. And by the way. How does all this begin? It begins with our salvation. That's the good. That begins it all. Our salvation.

And that's his point I believe. At the end of verse 29. When he says that he. That is Jesus. Might be the first born among many brethren. He's the first born.

But we're the brethren. He's the first born. And we've trusted in him. All right. So. The conjunction for links us with the meaning of good.

In verse 28. Verse 29 explains what the good is. Verse 28. It represents what we might call the smaller picture. That's why I said a moment ago.

We took that verse 28. And kind of an isolated. Kind of isolated from the rest of it. Because it kind of helps identify the smaller picture. Picture the snapshots of life.

[6 : 46] In that sense. The isolated events of life. Some good. Some bad. Some horrendously bad. And it helps us to make sense of them.

That God's working them all together. To make us more like Jesus. But now what about the second conjunction? The word moreover. If you have a King James or New King James.

And if you have another translation. So the same idea. What about that conjunction? There in verse 30. The moreover of verse 30.

Links us to the word purpose. The word purpose. In verse 28. So. Let's put this together.

The good. Is defined. By. Isolated events. All of them being. Used by God. To make us more like Jesus. But the purpose. Of verse 28.

[7 : 47] Is defined by God's. Ultimate objective. One that. By the way. In his mind. Has already been accomplished.

His ultimate. Objective. His grand. Salvific. Scheme. That's described for us.

There. It's. It's revealed to us. In verse 30. That's his purpose. And it's a purpose that.

Encompasses. All of eternity.

From eternity past. To the present. To eternity. Future. And beyond. If there's such a thing as beyond eternity. There's not.

Alright. So. This is defined. Or identified. Spelled out for us. Well. Maybe not so much spelled out for us. But.

[8 : 44] Identified for us. Let me just stick with that word. Because Paul doesn't describe. The things that he mentions here in verse 30. At least not here in verse 30. We have to go. Other places in scripture.

To understand what each of these words mean. But they're identified for us here. And. Like. I said. Verse 28. The good. That all things working together for good.

That's the smaller picture. The immediate. What's going on in our life now. The events that take place. But the purpose. Is.

The big picture. The big picture. Of redemption. Now some have called it the golden chain of redemption. And. So look at verse 30 again. And.

We'll see. Some of it though. We're going to have to go. Back. Reach back into verse 29. Also. But verse 30 again. Look at it. Very closely. Moreover. Whom he predestined.

[9 : 41] These. He also. Called. Whom he called. These. He also. Justified.

And. Whom he justified. These. He also. Glorified. All right. There it is. Now what does all that mean? Well. It means a lot.

And. Some of it. Maybe even. More than just. Some of it. Is. Difficult to explain. The first. Key word. That appears in verse 30.

Is. I think you would agree. The word. Predestined. Predestined. That's the first. Key word. In this kind of string. Of. Of. Big. Theological.

Words. And. It's. Important. That. We don't start. With the word. Predestined. You know. That's the first word.

[10:38] In the string. Because. We've got to go back. Into verse 28. And discover. Or 29. Rather. And discover. Who are the predestined. Who are they? Well.

According to verse 29. They are. Those. Whom God. Foreknew. Foreknew. So. We really need to start there. Don't. In fact.

There are five. Theologically. Significant. Words. In this text. That must be. Identified. And best. We can. Understood. Understood.

Together. They form this golden chain of redemption. And these words are. Foreknew. Predestined. Called.

Justified. Glorified. And then the fifth one is. Glorified. All right. There are. Those are the five. Words. Huge. Theological words.

[11:34] They really are. And. Intimidating. Words. But they're really not all that complicated. They're really not.

And I hope you'll agree with me. When we're done. And we're not going to get all. Of them tonight. Okay. In fact. I'm going to tell you. We're just going to get one of them. Tonight. Okay. If I could put it all in a nutshell.

Just. A real quick kind of. Overview. Your salvation. Begins. With. The foreknowledge of God. That's.

The link. That starts in heaven. The foreknowledge of God. Whom he foreknew. Then. We come to. Predestination. That's the link. That. Then. Brings us down to earth. Where we live. Where we are. Then.

[12:32] We. Come to. Calling. Calling. And that's the link. Where. You and I are connected. To the chain of redemption.

The calling of God. Then comes justification. Justification. And we have. Analyzed that word. And I've talked about that word at length.

In our study of Romans. But justification is the next word. And that is the link that takes us. Back to heaven. And glorification. And glorification. Is the link that secures us there. In heaven.

For all eternity. And a whole lot more than that. I mean. This doesn't hardly even do justice to the words. In a kind of a nutshell. In a kind of overview. This.

This. This is. This is it. Now let's take. Each of these words. One by one. And tonight. The word foreknew. Foreknew. Or. The doctrine of foreknowledge. Foreknowledge.

[13:28] The foreknowledge of God. It might be said. That foreknowledge. Is the most important. Of the five words. Now. Not the most amazing. Not more amazing.

And more. Wondrous. But. The. Most important. In a sense. And yet. I think. We. Should also admit. That it's the most difficult. To explain. And understand.

Because there. There's not a lot. In scripture. About the word foreknowledge. In fact. There are only five. Five times.

That it's used. And not all those five times. Is it used. In relation to God. We'll get to that. Here in a minute. I'm jumping ahead. Let me try to explain it. In both.

And this is just. The. The. The bare. Understanding. Of the word itself. In both. English. And in Greek. The word. Foreknowledge.

[14:26] Consists of. Two words. Joined together. It's a compound word. In both English. And Greek. For. Knowledge. And. You wouldn't have to know Greek.

To. To figure it out. What those two words are. And what they might mean. Even though. The word. For. Is kind of abbreviated. But in the Greek.

It's a compound word. And it begins with. Pro. Which is a Greek preposition. And it means. Before. And for. Means before. In English too. Okay.

So it just kind of comes. Right over in. To the English. By way of. You know. Several other. Paths. But. The other word. Is. Gnosko. Or.

Sometimes. Gnosis. And it is a form. Of the word. That means knowledge. Knowledge. All right. So. Pro. Before. Gnosis.

[15:22] Knowledge. Before. Knowledge. Really. Pretty simple. Isn't it? And so. What is the meaning? Simply put. It means. To know something. Before it happens. That's the word.

For knowledge. Just in the basic definition. Of the word. Again. I mentioned. A while ago. In fact. I. I said five. It appears seven times. Five times. In relation to God. There are a couple of times. That the word. For knowledge. Appears in the New Testament. In relation to man. Man's. Or. Human. For knowledge. There is a human. For knowledge. And then. Five times. In the New Testament. It. Appears. In. Reference. To God. And so. A divine. One. Sovereign. For knowledge.

Now. What's human. For knowledge. Well. Human. For knowledge. Is the ability. To know. What's going to happen. Before it happens. Because. It has always. Happened that way. Before.

[16:18] And therefore. You can be pretty sure. It's going to happen. That way again. That's just. It's basically. A human. For knowledge. For example. I know the sun. Is going to rise. In the morning. How do I know that?

Boy. I have a for knowledge. About that. How do I know that? Because it always does. I say. That's pretty simple. Isn't it? That's for knowledge. In the human sense.

We could say. It was. Hot today. Though it really wasn't very hot. But let's say. It was hot today. And. But in January. I know it's going to be cold. That. That just.

Simply put. That's human. For knowledge. It's. Knowing. The ability to know. That something's going to happen. Before it happens. Because it always happens that way. And you can be pretty sure.

It's going to happen that way again. All right. So that's. Human for knowledge. Now God's for knowledge. His divine. Sovereign for knowledge. Is entirely. Different.

[17:15] Entirely different. I'll define it this way. God's for knowledge. is his divine ability. To know. What is going to happen.

Before it happens. Because he intends to make it happen. That's divine. Sovereign.

For knowledge. Now. We could say. That in a limited way. Humans have. This kind of. For knowledge. I mean. You might say tonight.

Might be thinking. Right there. Where you're sitting. You're saying. You know. When church is over tonight. I'm going to. Mazio's. And eat a salad.

And pepperoni. A couple slices. Of pepperoni pizza. And a Coke. That's your. Foreknowledge. Of what's going to take place. After church tonight. Because.

[18:12] Not because. It has always happened that way. Although with some of you. It has always happened that way. But. But because. You intend. For that to happen. And you're going to move.

And work. Everything. From now on. In that direction. So that you make it happen. Because that's what you want to happen. Now. There is a limit.

To that kind of foreknowledge. Isn't there. Because. You know. Something might change. And. Change your plans. You might. Have a spell. Here tonight. And pass out in the aisle.

And we take you down to the hospital. You're okay. But you didn't make it to Massey's. Or you. Get out here. On Washington Boulevard. And you have a little fender bender. Everything's okay. But you don't really feel like.

Going to Massey's. After that. Or maybe someone comes to you. And says. Let's go to Wendy's tonight. And.

[19:06] You say. Okay. I haven't been there in a while. I'll go to Wendy's. And so your plan changes. Just that quick. Just that. You know. Just like that. What you intended to happen. And you had foreknowledge of.

Because that was your plan. Out there. Changed to something else. That's. That's the way it is with humans. Because we can't count on things. We can't. Make things happen. We can plan for them. And. And in our minds. It's just as good as done. And we can't wait to get there. And I wish I hadn't brought up. Massey's. Because you're thinking about that right now. Some of you are thinking about Wendy's.

But anyway. But that. God is not like that. See. God is not like us. God is not a man.

He's not human. He's not limited. He's not discovering things. He's not making mistakes. He's not changing his mind. About anything. God's foreknowledge.

[20:03] Does not simply mean. That he knows. What is going to happen. Because he's able to look down. Through the corridors of time. In history. And see.

That a certain thing is going to happen. And then make his plan accordingly. That's not the way God works. He knows what is going to happen. Because he either.

Directly causes it to happen. Or. He gives his permission. For it to happen. But either way. He's working all ends. All scenarios.

An infinitesimal. Number of scenarios. He's working them all. Toward. His intended goal. And. All of them. And.

His. Foreknowledge. Of events. To take place. Are going to take place. They're going to happen. Because he intends for them to.

[20 : 58] And so every. Event. In the universe. Falls under one of these two categories. Directly caused. Or. Divinely permitted. But all of them. Are accomplishing the same. Now.

How is. Foreknow. Used of God. In the Bible. Well. In Romans 11. 2. We'll go. There first. You. Can turn to it. If you want to.

But I'm going. To go ahead. Because I have it written. Right here. In my notes. All right. The Bible says. In Romans 11. 2. That God. Has not.

Rejected. His people. Whom. He. Foreknew. All right. We're not. I'm not trying to make a point. About what that particular passage means.

But the. Use. The application of the word foreknew. Is. Is key here. Is. That. God's.

[21 : 54] General. Knowledge. About all people. That scripture is talking about. No. Very specific. This. The verse. Clearly means.

That his foreknowledge. Was a. Focus. Upon a particular. Group of people. And I would say. A focus. Of his grace. Upon a particular.

Group of people. In this case. The Jews. Acts. 2. 23. In Peter's sermon. On the day of Pentecost. He declared. And he was speaking of Jesus.

The Messiah. This man. Delivered over. By the predetermined plan. And foreknowledge of God. There's our word. Fore. Knowledge.

Forenew. Foreknowledge of God. You. He said. You nailed to a cross. By the hands of godless men. And put him to death. Now. Peter speaks. Here.

[22 : 48] Of God's. First of all. His predetermined plan. It's the word. Horit. So. Bit of my tongue. Glad I'm not a Greek.

Horit. So. We got our word. Horizon. From it. God had a predetermined. Boundary. His plan. That he's working. Here. And. And it's specifying.

Peter's specifying. That the death of Christ. Was not by. Chance. But. Rather. Was eternally. Worked out. By God. His predetermined plan.

And then he speaks. And uses our word. The word. Foreknowledge. He puts these two together. The predetermined plan. And foreknowledge. Foreknowledge. Of God. And.

That. Is God's. Redemptive. Speaking of his. Redemptive. Love. That is. Purposed. It's directed. To have.

[23 : 46] His son. Put to death. His. It's purposeful. His. Redemptive. Love. And. Not. Not clearly. In that verse. God.

Did not. Look. Down. The corridors. Of time. And see. That Jesus. Would be. Crucified. His son. Would be. Crucified. He didn't. Look out. Into the future. And see. That that was. Going to happen. And then.

Decide. To put a plan. Together. In response. To what he saw. Was going to happen. That's not. What he did. He planned.

The death of Christ. He planned it. And what we're trying to do. Is understand. The. Word. Forenew. And the time. And the places. Where it appears.

And see. What it means. Not in relation. To man. Because it means. Something different. With us. But in. Relation. To God. Sovereign.

[24 : 41] God. He. Planned. The death of Christ. His. Foreknowledge. That's the word. That. That. That. Was used.

Luke. Used. There. In Acts. His. Foreknowledge. Explains. His. Sovereign. Redemptive. Love. All right. Also. First. Peter. One.

Twenty. And. Twenty. One. Peter. Explains. Jesus. Christ's. Redemptive. Work. And. This. Is. What he says. For he. Speaking of Jesus. Was. Foreknown.

Actually. In the King. James. And. New. King. James. James. They. A little bit more. Interpretive. Of. The. Meaning. Of. The. Word. As. It's. Used. Here. They.

Translated. For. Ordained. But. It's. Pronounced. Prognusca. He. Was. For. Ordained. Before. The. Foundation.

[25 : 36] Of. The. World. But. Has. Appeared. In. These. Last. Times. For. The. Sake. Of. You. Who. Through. Him. Are. Believers. In. God. Now.

Was. This. Just. A. General. Knowledge. On. God's. Part. General. Knowledge. A. Before. Knowledge. Of. Jesus. Coming. His. Advent. Into. The. World. Of. Course. Not. God. Sent. His. Son. Into. The.

World. As. Our. Redeemer. First. Peter. One. Two. Peter. Used. And. I. Put. These. In. Reverse. Order.

Because. I'm. Going. From. The. Application. You know. First. There. To. The. Jews. In. Romans. Eleven. Two. To. Jesus. There. In. Acts. Chapter. Two. Again. To. Jesus. And. His. Redemptive.

[26 : 29] Work. In. Two. God's. Foreknowledge. Concerning. Us. In.

First. Peter. One. Two. Peter. Used. The. Same. Word. To. Define. God's. Foreknowledge. Of. Believers. And. He. Said. To. Those. Who. Reside. As. Aliens. Who. Are. Chosen. According. To. The. Foreknowledge.

Of. God. The. Father. By. The. Sanctifying. Work. Of. The. Spirit. To. Obey. Jesus. According. To. The. Foreknowledge. Of. God. The. Father. And. We. Cannot. See. Clearly. As. We. Do. In. These. Other. Verses.

To. Understand. Foreknowledge. In. Relation. To. God. That. It. Is. Not. Only. It. Is. God. Knowing. What. Is. Going. To. Happen. Before. It. Happens. Because. He. Intends. For. To.

[27 : 25] Happen. That. Way. We. Cannot. See. That. Meaning. In. All. These. Other. Verses. And. Not. Also. See. It. As. Applied. To. Us. To.

Believers. See. Did. The. Father. Simply. Have. A. Prior. Knowledge. Of. Who. Would. Believe. And. So. He. Then. Therefore.

Chose. The. Ones. He. Knew. Would. Believe. Anyway. No. Not. At. All. John. Stott. Highly. Respect.

John. Stott. An. Anglican. And. He. Wrote. This. These. Words. He. Said. If. God. Predestines. People. Because. They. Are. Going.

To. Believe. Then. The. Ground. Or. The. Very. Basis. Of. Their. Salvation. Is. In. Themselves. In. Their. Merit. Instead. Of. In. Him. And.

[28 : 18] His. Mercy. Paul. Stott. Said. Paul. Paul's. Whole. Emphasis. Is. On. God's. Free. Initiative. Of. Grace. You.

See. Peter. Meant. More. Than. Simply. Prior. Knowledge. God. Set. And. This. Is. Important. For. Us. To. Understand. Because. There's. A. link. An. Inextricable. Link. Between. His. For. Knowledge. Of. Us. And. His. Love. For. Us. Can't.

Separate. The. Two. God. Set. His. Affections. Upon. A. Particular. People. A. Particular. People. He.

Would. Choose. To. Redeem. Through. His. Son. John. Murray. Called. It. Sovereign. Distinguishing. Love. I like.

[29 : 13] That. Sovereign. Distinguishing. Love. Amos. Amos. Three. Two. Would. Be. An. Example. Of. That. Understanding.

In. Amos. Three. Two. You. Only. This. God. Speaking. You. Only. Have. I. Known. One. Of. All. The. Families. Of. The. Earth. And. The word.

No. By the way. Is. More. Than. Just. Knowledge. Is. An. Intimacy. Intimate. Knowledge. Same. Word. Used. When. It. Speaks. Of. A. Of.

A. Man. Knowing. His. Wife. The. Two. Knowing. One. Another. In. An. Intimate. Way. And. So. Here's. The. Idea. For. You. Only. Canaanites.

Or. The. Egyptians. Or. The. Assyrians. Or. Any. Of. The. Other. Nations. On. The. Earth. Certainly. Not. But. Rather. His. Is. A. Special.

[30 : 11] Kind. Of. Knowledge. A. Sovereign. Distinguishing. Love. Again. To use. John. Murray. So. When.

You. Apply. This. To. Salvation. God. Foreknew. You. Means. God. Foreloved. You. He. He. He. Not. Only. Knew. You. Before. You. Were. Born.

He. Loved. You. Before. You. Were. Born. He. Before. The. World. Was. Created. He. Not. Only. Knew. He. Was. Going. To. Create. You. He. Knew.

He. Was. Going. To. Love. You. That's. God. Now. We. Can't. Operate. That. Way. Not. In. The. Full. Assents. But. This. Is. God. He. Loved. You. Before. You. Loved. Him. He. Chose. You. Before. You. Chose. Him. He. He. He. Sought. You. Before. You. Sought. Him. He. Found. You. Before. You. Found. Him. Love. Begins. Not. With. Us. But. With. God. With.

[31:02] Him. Even. Before. Christ. Came. He. Knew. You. And. He. Loved. You. Someone. Described. It. This. Way. And. I. Think. It's.

As. Close. As. An. Illustration. Can. Come. To. This. It's. Like. An. Expectant. Mother. Who. Loves. Her. Child. Before. It. Is. Born. And. While. The. Baby. Is. Going. Is. Growing. Inside. Her. She. Prays. For. The. Baby. Sings. To. The. Pats. Her. Tummy. And. Talks. To. Baby. She. Has. A. Relationship. With. Her. Child. Before. Her. Child. Even. Knows. Who. She. Is. Or. You. Might. Think. Of. Parents. Who. Are. Adopting. A. Child. And. They.

Can. Truly. Say. To. That. Child. Before. You. Knew. Us. We. Knew. You. Before. You. Loved. Us. Chose.

[31:58] Me. Before. He. Saw. Me. Because. If. He. Had. Waited. Until. He. Saw. Me. He. Might. Not. Have. Wanted. Me. You. Ever. Seen. A. Picture. Of. Charles. Haddon. Spurgeon. You. Would. Understand. That. But.

The. Same. Is. True. Of. Us. And. Not. Just. The. Physical. Appearance. But. Who. We. Are. And. What. We. Like. And. And. Our. Wickedness. And. Sinfulness. If. God. Saw. Us. He. Wouldn't. Want. Us. If.

That. It. Was. Based. Simply. On. What. He. Saw. If. Was. Based. Simply. On. What. What. He. May. Have. Seen. In. Regard. To. Our. Potential.

That. Maybe. We. Could. Have. Been. Or. Could. Be. Something. Good. He.

Told. A. Story. Of. Old. Man. Who. Stood. Up. In. A. Worship. Service. And. Testified. How. God. Had. Saved. Him. And. That. He.

[32:54] Had. Saved. Him. From. From. A. Life. Of. Sin. And. In. His. Testimony. He. Told. How. God. Found. Him. At. A. Very. Terrible. Time. In. His. Life. Terrible. Place. He.

Saved. Him. And. He. Cleaned. Him. Up. And. Justified. These. His. Word. Justified. Him. Forgave. Him. And. Gave. Him. A. Brand. New. Life. He. Gave. This. Testimony. In. The. Church. And. After. We're. At. Service. Was. Over. A. Quote. Brother. Came. To. Him. And. Said. Well. My. Dear. Brother. You. You. Gave. A. Wonderful. Testimony. And. Gave. Glory. To. God. And. That's. Good. But.

You. Left. Something. Out. You. Didn't. Talk. About. Your. Part. Of. Salvation. Don't. You. Know. Salvation. Is. Part. Us. And. Part. God. And. You. Left. Your. Part. Out.

The. Man. Who. Had. Given. The. Testimony. He. Said. You. No. My. Dear. Brother. You. Are. Right. You. So. Right. I. Did. Leave. My. Part. Out. He. Said. My. Part. Was. To. Run. Away. From. God. As.

[33:48] Fast. As. Could. God's. Part. Was. To. Run. After. Me. Until. He. Caught. Me. And. Aren't. You. Glad. He. Caught. You.