

# Predestination, Election and Foreknowledge! What Does The Bible Say?

## I. Introductory Remarks.

The purpose of this lesson is to come to an understanding of what the Bible has to say concerning Predestination, Election and the Foreknowledge of God. This is one of the more controversial doctrines that has separated and divided Christians throughout the history of Christianity. I believe it is very important that we know what we believe in these areas as it affects the way we carry out our Christianity.

In this lesson we will see that both predestination and election flow out of God's foreknowledge.

***Romans 8:29*** *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

***1 Peter 1:1-2*** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

## II. Defining the Terms.

In this part of the lesson I would like to begin by defining the meaning of the terms that are being used. The definitions that I give will show you which way I lean on these important doctrines and will establish a foundation for which I will be building on throughout the lesson.

### 1. The Foreknowledge of God.

"Fore" or before simply means that God knows before hand what the future holds. Because of His omniscience, He knows the end from the beginning. He is the Alpha and the Omega. Nothing is hid from Him, Who knows what things we have need of before we ask Him.<sup>1</sup>

***Matthew 6:8*** *"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

The Greek word for "foreknow" is "Proginosko" and means "to know beforehand." The Greek word for "foreknowledge" is "Prognosis" and means "a knowing beforehand."

## 2. Predestination.

Predestination is to foreordain or determine an act or event. It is not simply foreknowledge of a future event, but rather making that event take place. It is predetermined to happen and nothing can change it.

### **The Example of Adam's Sin & Man's Reconciliation through Jesus Christ.**

Through foreknowledge God saw that Adam would fall and as a result predestinated man's reconciliation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ were predetermined or predestinated events that could not be changed. **But they were set in motion by the foreknowledge of God.**

**1 Peter 1:18-20** ...*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...*

**Mark 14:34-36** *Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*

The word "predestinate" is the Greek word "Pro-orizo," and means "to previously mark out a boundary line, to pre-determine, decide beforehand." Compared with foreknowledge, predestination is used to refer to a determination made previous to its actual coming to pass and which carried with it the power to make it come to pass. Thus, it is an action of will only attributed to God Himself. We may say that foreknowledge is "to know beforehand that certain things will happen", while predestination is "to arrange or determine beforehand how they shall happen". However foreknowledge precedes predestination. God's foreknowledge did not stem from election or predestination. Election and predestination are founded in God's foreknowledge. <sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Election of God.

There is no question concerning God's elect. The Bible very clearly states that there is a select group of people, a peculiar people different than the others of the earth because of their new spiritual birth that is according to God's grace.

**Romans 11:5-7** *Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened.*

**2 Timothy 2:10** *Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

Henry Clarence Thiessen defines election as a sovereign act of God's grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those who He foreknew would accept Him. This is redemption in its elective aspect. In its simplest meaning, election refers to the intention, process and result of making a choice. It refers to an act of the will but more specifically in the Scriptures to an act of the divine will.<sup>3</sup>

Though election and predestination go hand in hand, the following distinction should be noted.

Election means that God has chosen to save those He foreknew would accept His Son.

Predestination means that God has fixed the destiny beforehand of those who are and who are not of His election. Thus predestination can be viewed as bringing to pass of God's election. While election looks back to foreknowledge, predestination looks forward to destiny. Yet both are based on God's foreknowledge and neither violates man's free-will choice.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Understanding the Depth of Foreknowledge.

God Has Perfect Knowledge of Events, Past, Present and Future. Perfect knowledge of coming events is a part of God's very nature. He is Omniscient or all knowing. This means past, present and future.

#### 1. Jesus' Crucifixion Was Known By God Beforehand.

**Acts 2:23** *"Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*

## **2. Israel Was Foreknown As God's Earthly People.**

**Romans 11:2** *God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying...*

## **3. The Church Is Foreknown As Well.**

**1 Peter 1:1-2** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

God's absolute foreknowledge of persons, of things, of events, small and great is a divine attribute.

## **3. Prophetic Passages of Scripture Reveal God's Foreknowledge.**

It was by this foreknowledge that God was able to have his Prophets write of future events. When you think of all the wonderful passages of prophetic Scripture we have, you see this as a result of God's infinite knowledge being revealed to mankind.

**Romans 15:4** *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

The Greek word for "written before" is "prographo", which means "to write previously" shows that God was able to have His Prophets write of future events that He revealed to them. God simply chooses to reveal a portion of His infinite knowledge to His prophets.

**Amos 3:7** *Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

## **4. God's Foreknowledge is the Key to Understanding Predestination.**

In this lesson one of our chief concerns is to determine whether some people are predestinated to be saved, while others are predestinated to be lost.

How is it possible that God could determine even before the creation which individuals will be saved, and could even write their names in the book of life? The answer is found in the fact and nature of God's foreknowledge. The Bible explicitly relates predestination to God's foreknowledge, and a correct understanding of this relationship is the key to whole question of election to salvation.<sup>5</sup>

It is through the understanding of God's foreknowledge that we see God does not predestinate one person to be saved, while predestinating another person to be lost. We will see, though there are certain events in relationship to God's foreknowledge and the council of His will that He does predestinate to happen.

### **Review of the Meaning of Predestination.**

The word "*predestination*" is the Greek word "*Pro-orizo*," and means "*to previously mark out a boundary line, to pre-determine, decide beforehand.*" Compared to foreknowledge, predestination is used to refer to a determination made previous to its actual coming to pass and which carried with it the power to make it come to pass. Thus, it is an action of will only attributed to God Himself.<sup>6</sup>

Herbert Lockyer defines predestination very similarly. He says, "*Predestination is the exercise of divine sovereignty in the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose or decree.*"<sup>7</sup>

The words predestinate, predestination, determined and ordained (the Greek word Proorize - pronounced pro-or-id-zo) are only found six times<sup>8</sup> in the New Testament. It is not found in the Old Testament at all. In the New Testament it is always used in relationship to the above meanings. (*Acts 4:28, Romans 8:29-30, 1 Corinthians 2:7, and Ephesians 1:5,11*).

## **IV. Various Events that are Predestinated.**

As already mentioned, the events that Scripture identify as being predestinated are those events that relate to God's ultimate purpose.

**There is nowhere in Scripture where you find individual lives identified with the explicit meaning of predestination!**

### **1. The Atonement Of Christ Was Pre-Determined Or Predestinated.**

**Acts 4:27-28** *"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."*

**1 Corinthians 2:7** *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which **God ordained** before the ages for our glory...*

## **2. The Saints of God were Predestinated to be Adopted Into His Family.**

**Ephesians 1:5** *...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

## **3. God Has A Day For His Return.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

## **4. Christians are Predestinated to be Conformed Into the Image of God.**

**Romans 8:29-30** *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Again, we see that predestination flows out of God's foreknowledge. The point here is that God has determined that all Christians will eventually totally be conformed into His image. When we are born again by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is working in us to bring us along in this wonderful calling and election.

## **5. God Has A Set Day For Judgment.**

**Acts 17:30-31** *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, "because He has **appointed** a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."*

**These are the boundaries that have been marked out and predetermined and decided beforehand. When we become the elect of God through God's**

**foreknowledge**, the Holy Spirit is on an inexorable course in our lives to bring us into the fulfillment of the boundaries set forth according to the council of God's will and purpose.

### **Summary of Understanding Predestination and Foreknowledge.**

As Herbert Lockyer says, *"Predestination is the divine determining the glorious consummation of all who through faith, and surrender become the Lord's."*<sup>9</sup>

Predestination does not teach who should be saved and who shouldn't be saved, but simply teaches that God has determined or predestinated that each person who is born again by the Spirit of God will be adopted into His family and will be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ completely at His appearing. (See 1 John 3:2).

As we move to the next section on election and foreknowledge, we shall see even more clearly that the provision of the atonement provides for all men to be saved. God is no respecter of persons. Predestination is linked to God's love. Therefore, He can never be guilty of anything capricious. He never acts contrary to His own nature.

## **V. Election and Foreknowledge.**

In this part of the lesson the intention will be to examine what the true Biblical meaning of election means. There are a number of Scriptures that refer to God's people as the elect of God. Here are a few.

**Isaiah 45:4** *For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel **My elect**, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

**Matthew 24:31** *"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together **His elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

**Colossians 3:12** *Therefore, as the **elect of God**, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering...*

As we consider what it means to be a part of God's elect, it's important to understand that there are differing views on what this means.

## 1. Election Defined.

**The Unconditional View:** The Calvinistic view teaches unconditional election which says that certain individuals are unconditionally elected or predestined to become believers in Jesus Christ and thus be saved. This view teaches that from among the total mass of sinful humanity, even before it has been created, God chooses which individuals He wants to respond to the Gospel call. When the call is issued, those who have been chosen are irresistibly enabled to answer it. These are saved, while the rest of mankind is condemned to hell forever.<sup>10</sup>

**The Conditional View:** The correct and more Biblical view is the idea that God predestines to salvation those individuals who meet the gracious conditions which He has set forth. In other words, election to salvation is conditional and particular.<sup>11</sup>

The remainder of this lesson will set out to prove that the conditional view is the Biblical view of election. We have already discussed the meaning of God's foreknowledge and how it works with predestination, not let's see how it works with election.

*1 Peter 1:2 ...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

As quoted earlier in the lesson, *"By election we mean that sovereign act of God's grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him. In its simplest meaning election refers to the intention, process and result of making a choice."*

## 2. Election Is According To God's Grace.

*Romans 11:5-6 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

Like Christ, Grace does not force its way, it stands at the door and knocks. The Bible teaches very plainly that the gifts of grace are appropriated by faith. If by works, then grace is no longer grace. Likewise, if it is by sovereign imposition, the grace is also no longer grace.<sup>12</sup>

Grace is the ill-deserved, unmerited and unearned favor of God bestowed upon sinful man. God is not obligated to save man. Yet in providing salvation, His justice required that it be made available for all men on His terms. God is not partial, nor is He a respecter of persons.<sup>13</sup>

**Romans 2:11** *For there is no partiality with God.*

**Titus 2:11** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

**2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Imagine the hypocrisy of a God who expressed a longing to gather a people he had predestined to damnation.

**Matthew 23:37** *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"*

### **Can God's Grace Be Resisted?**

When considering the aspect of God's grace in relationship to election, we must consider whether or not God's grace is irresistible. Can it be resisted? Or is it as the Calvinist's say, "*irresistible?*" Again, we must look to the Scriptures.

If God's sovereignty meant that His will is always done and performed down to the smallest detail, it would mean that His will is also accomplished in the lostness of the lost. But that is not the case. God holds out his hands to those who will not listen to Him. He gives His Holy Spirit to those who resist the gift and Jesus desired to gather the Jews to Himself, but they refused Him.<sup>14</sup>

**Romans 10:21** *But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."*

**Acts 7:51** *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."*

**Isaiah 65:12** *Therefore I will number you for the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear, but did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight."*

God in his decision to create man, placed a higher value on freedom than on sinless conformity to His will. God's plan for mankind does not involve a manipulation of man from behind the scenes. His will consists rather of general purposes or aims for beings who are themselves genuinely free and creative, and who have significant power to shape the course of history.<sup>15</sup>

### **The example of Paul** – *Acts 26:19.*

Paul's salvation experience comes close to what Calvinists' refer to as irresistible grace. In his case the hand of God was clearly in evidence. Years later when recalling his salvation experience to King Agrippa, Paul said, "*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*"

The vision was bolt from the blue; it had the effect of an attack with a deadly weapon. Yet in retrospect, Paul spoke of it as something to which he could have been disobedient to. He could have resisted God's grace.

It is obvious, according to Scripture, that election is according to grace and that it can be resisted. However, it does not mean that once we become one of God's elect we are locked in with no chance of falling short and not making it into God's eternal kingdom. We are to make our calling and election sure.

**2 Peter 1:10** *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble.*

### **3. Who Are The Elect Or Chosen Ones?**

We should ask ourselves the question in light of view of conditional election, "Who are the elect or chosen ones and how does one become one of them?"

#### **Israel Of The Old Testament Was God's Chosen People Or Elect.**

**Deuteronomy 7:6** *For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.*

***Psalms 33:12*** *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, and the people whom He has chosen as His own inheritance.*

Even though Israel of the Old Testament was God's chosen or elect people, they individually were commanded to keep God's laws and if they didn't they were cut off.

***Exodus 31:14*** *You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. (See Exodus 12:19 and Leviticus 7:20, 25).*

In the same vein, those Israelites who accepted God's continuing plan of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ were saved and the rest were lost. This was present truth for their day and they had to receive it and choose Jesus Christ to be one of the chosen. (See Romans 11:1-10, John 3:1-21 and Acts 2:36-39).

**Under the New Covenant God's Desire is For all to be Saved and be a Part of the Elect.**

***2 Peter 3:9*** *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish** but that all should come to repentance.*

Whoever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and confesses and believes in their heart that He rose from the dead shall be saved and become a part of the elect.

***Romans 10:9-10***...*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*

#### **4. The Universality of God's Grace and Call.**

We have now come to a very important part of this lesson. At this point in the lesson it will be important to take an in depth look at the universality of God's grace and call.

***John 1:29*** *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

We must determine whether the atonement of Jesus Christ is a limited atonement or an unlimited atonement. Those who believe in the unconditional view of election believe that some are destined to be saved and others are destined for eternal damnation.

Noted author and Christian counselor Jay Adams writes, *"As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom He died."*<sup>16</sup>

This kind of teaching is in direct contradiction of the Scriptures and what they have to say concerning Christ and His atonement. The divine response to Jesus Christ embraces the whole world.

**John 3:16** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

It is because He died for all that we can claim for ourselves and confidently extend to others the right and title to sonship and salvation through Christ, and live in a state of blessed assurance. The following scriptures make it very clear that Christ died for every person.

**2 Corinthians 5:14** *For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if **One died for all**, then all died;*

**Titus 2:11** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to **all men**...*

**Hebrews 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for **everyone**.*

**1 Timothy 2:3-4** *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who **desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

**John 12:32** *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all peoples** to Myself."*

**1 John 2:2** *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for **the whole world**.*

**Romans 5:18** *Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.*

Since all humanity came under judgment in Adam, all humanity must come into at least the possibility of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

**Romans 11:32** *For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.*

The truth of God's universal grace needs to be proclaimed fervently, a grace that springs from a love which cannot be limited temporally, geographically, racially, religiously, economically, sexually, or culturally, a love which has no limits except the limits which unbelief imposes.<sup>17</sup>

**At this point in the lesson the question comes to mind, "If these scriptures are so clear, how is it possible to come to a limited view of atonement?"**

Calvin's point is to deny the universality of the atonement by making the word (all) refer to worldwide distribution of the church, rather than the universally potential redemptive work of Christ.<sup>18</sup>

The problem with this thinking is that there are Scriptures such as 1 John 4:14-15 that personalize the atonement by using the word, "**whoever.**"

**1 John 4:14-15** *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. **Whoever** confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

## **5. Man's Free Will.**

We have now seen that God does have an elect according to His foreknowledge. We have also seen that it is God's will that all men be saved and come to repentance. According to God's foreknowledge some will be lost to eternal damnation because they chose not to receive Him. Mankind has always had a choice since the creation of the world.

## **Choice Was Available For Adam And Eve.**

**Genesis 2:16-17** *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Like the Pharisees and lawyers later on, Adam **rejected** the purposes of God for himself.

**Luke 7:30** *But the Pharisees and lawyers **rejected** the counsel of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.*

The fall of Adam demonstrates conclusively that God's will is not something that is done regardless. It is something that can be rejected just as the Pharisees and the lawyers did.

### **Choice Was Available Under The Law.**

**Deuteronomy 30:19** *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; **therefore choose life**, that both you and your descendants may live;*

### **Choice is available under the New Covenant.**

**Matthew 22:2-3** *The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and **they were not willing to come.***

This parable represents the kingdom truth of the New Testament concerning the ability to make a choice concerning salvation. It is a kingdom parable.

**John 5:40** *But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*

### **The Apostle Paul Chose to Walk Away From an Open Door.**

**2 Corinthians 2:12-13** *Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and **a door was opened to me by the Lord**, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; **but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.***

God's dealings with his human creation are dynamic and personal and the responses that we make to Him have far reaching consequences.

**Galatians 6:8** *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

Man is a free-will agent and must respond to the convicting and soul-saving power of the Holy Spirit in order to receive the salvation provided at infinite cost. Although salvation is free, it is costly as it cost God His Son. Man is free to accept or reject the salvation which he in no way deserves nor could ever merit.<sup>19</sup>

**Titus 3:5** *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

Clark H. Pinnock in his essay on “*Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History*” says, “*In seeking to establish full reality of man's freedom, we are not motivated by any desire to rob God of the glory which is due Him as ruler over all. We wish merely to observe that the rule of God according to the Bible does not reduce men to automata, nor make the conflict between the sinful desires and God's loving purposes an illusion or a charade*”.<sup>20</sup>

God in His decision to create man placed a higher value on freedom than on sinless conformity to His will. Just as God does not force a person to sin, neither does He force anyone to accept grace. A person chooses to accept grace when he decides to meet the conditions which God has established for receiving it.

## **VI. Commonly Misunderstood Scriptures.**

When looking at the issue of predestination, election and God's foreknowledge there are certain Scriptures that seem to favor the unconditional view that teaches certain individuals are unconditionally elected or predestined to become believers in Jesus Christ and thus be saved. If these Scriptures are read quickly without much consideration to the context or word meanings it would seem that God does in fact choose some and reject others, for no other reason except that He is God. Let's look at these Scriptures in detail and contextually.

### **1. The Theme of God's Drawing the Elect to Jesus.**

This theme, found in John chapter six, seems to reinforce the idea that God's sovereign power is behind the "inevitable decision" of receiving Jesus Christ.

**John 6:37** *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

**John 6:44** *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

**John 6:65** *And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."*

**Verses 37-40 are based upon verse 35, where we see that eternal life is dependent on coming and believing.**

**John 6:35** *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."*

Throughout John's Gospel there is an insistence on man's choosing between light and darkness; human responsibility is making that choice. The sovereign force of the Father's will always considers human responsibility before moving.

**The Context Of These Verses Presupposes Responsibility.**

**John 6:45** *It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.*

**The "drawing" of God takes place when man abandons his own judgment and "hears" and "learns" from the Father and so allows God to speak to him.<sup>21</sup>**

**Isaiah 54:13** *All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

In the context of chapter six Jesus' discourse is on the Bread of Life and how He came from the Father. He is the Bread that came from Heaven.

**John 6:32-33** *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*

In response to the question asked in verses 30-31 Jesus does not answer them, but once again appeals to the close connection between His claims and the Father's purpose. **If their hearts had been centered on the Father's purpose rather than the legal requirements of the law, the Father would have drawn their hearts unto Jesus.**

**Luke 16:31** *But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'*

People who try to gain eternal life on their own terms will find themselves unable to come to Jesus because it has not been granted to him by the Father; they have in fact been resisting the leading of the Father.

**Psalms 138:6** *Though the LORD is on high, yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.*

**Psalms 34:18** *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

## **2. Scriptures That Seemingly Suggest Limited Atonement.**

**Mark 10:45** *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

**John 10:14** *I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

**John 10:26-27** *But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

These Scriptures could seem to suggest the doctrine of limited atonement. Many assert that Christ died for "many" not all and for "the sheep" not those who are wolves, etc. The reference is to such passages of Scripture where Jesus said, "You are not My sheep, and you are from your father the devil."

One of the primary principles for interpreting any parabolic saying is that one must not go beyond the central teaching; especially, one must not base doctrines on what it does not say. Here Jesus is teaching about His death. In short, Jesus is teaching that He shows His love for His sheep by dying for them, but nowhere limits His death to them alone.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. The Book of Acts and Predestination Language.

As we look at some of the Scriptures in the Book of Acts that seem to suggest predestination language in reference to certain individuals, we must consider the time frame of this book was during a period in which God's predestinated purposes for mankind were being played out in a big way.

The Book of Acts is a very pivotal time in God's overall redemptive purposes for mankind. There are times in history when God directly intervenes more than at other times. This was a time of God's awesome power intervening in the lives of individuals who were predestinated according to God's foreknowledge. In relating this, Luke in Acts is careful to show that all was accomplished under the divine impetus and occurred as part of God's redemptive plan. It is God who intervened to guide the church in its redemptive purpose.

- The disciples given the Holy Spirit to witness with power – *Acts 1:8*
- Tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost – *Acts 2:4*
- Obedience to God's purpose a preeminence – *Acts 5:19*
- Philip the Evangelist and the Angel – *Acts 8:26*
- Paul's conversion with the shining light – *Acts 9:3*
- Peter's vision of Gentiles coming into the kingdom – *Acts 10:10*
- Peter released from prison by an angel – *Acts 12:8*
- Paul and Barnabus sent out under direction of the Holy Spirit – *Acts 13:2*
- Paul's vision to go to Macedonia – *Acts 16:9*
- Paul and Silas in jail and earthquake happens – *Acts 16:25*
- The many, many miracles throughout the book.

Let's keep in mind that the definition of predestination is the exercise of divine sovereignty in the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose or decree. This is what is happening in these scriptures. God is using His power make His purpose come to pass. With this in mind let's look at some of the Scriptures that seem to suggest predestination in the lives of individuals.

#### The Cornelius Episode.

***Acts 11:15*** *And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.*

This is Peter's account to the Jerusalem council as to why he allowed Gentiles to be baptized. Here God is the principle person in the redemption of these Gentile

believers. Was this an unconditional choice on God's part and was man's volition involved?

The answer is found in Acts 10:1-2 where we see that Cornelius was a man who feared God, a Gentile who worshipped God but had not taken the final step of circumcision.

**Acts 10:1-2** *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.*

In all reality he was a man, who was open to God's call. His heart had been prepared, so God used him in light of His foreknowledge.

### **Gentiles Appointed to Eternal Life.**

**Acts 13:48** *Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life **believed**.*

While this passage is talking about a divine election, we must keep in mind that election is according to God's foreknowledge. The human volition or will is also involved in this passage in the fact that it says **they "believed."** In the context the unbelieving Jews were rejected on the basis of personal decision.

**Acts 13:46** *.but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.*

### **The Example of Lydia, the Seller of Purple.**

**Acts 16:14** *Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.*

In the context of the Scripture it says she was a person who worshipped God. She was a worshipper of God and had already been seeking the truth. Therefore the Lord used her for His glory in this situation.

### **The Lord Has Many People In The City Of Corinth.**

**Acts 18:10** *For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.*

This passage speaks of foreknowledge more than unconditional election or predestination. Verse 27 speaks of those who believed through grace.

There is no hint of a rigid application to a few only. In conclusion, Luke, in Acts, stresses the divine activity behind Salvation but does not identify this with a rigid predestination call.

#### **4. Predestination Language in Paul's Writings.**

**Romans 8:29-30** *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

Predestination here as we have already seen relates to the benefits of salvation and not the act itself. All believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Throughout Paul's writings he stresses security and election, but also stresses human responsibility. Election is related to those who have believed and promises God's strength in bringing them to a life of holiness and to final salvation.

#### **VI. Summary & Concluding Thoughts.**

The purpose of this lesson has been to come to an understanding of what the Bible has to say concerning predestination, election and the foreknowledge of God. The following points have been made scripturally clear throughout this lesson:

- Predestination and election flow out of God's foreknowledge.
- Foreknowledge is God's ability to know before hand what the future holds, because of His omniscience.
- Predestination is the exercise of divine sovereignty in the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose or decree.
- While foreknowledge is to know before hand that certain things will happen, predestination is to arrange or determine beforehand how they shall happen.
- Through foreknowledge God saw that Adam would fall and as a result predestinated man's reconciliation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.
- Election is a sovereign act of God's grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those who He foreknew would accept Him.

- Whoever comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and confesses and believes in their heart that He rose from the dead shall be saved and become a part of the elect. God does not will some to be saved and some to be lost.
- Election is according to grace, yet grace does not force its way, it stands at the door and knocks just as Christ does.
- God's grace can be resisted by those who harden their hearts to the wooing of the Father.
- God in His decision to create man placed a higher value on freedom than on sinless conformity to His will.
- God has given every man a free will to accept God's grace when he decides to meet the conditions which God has established for receiving it.
- There are some Scriptures that have the potential of being misunderstood if not looked at carefully in their full context. When looking at them in their proper context it becomes very clear that there is no such thing as limited atonement.
- The call of God's grace is not irresistible and limited to the elect. The drawing power of God is limited by the hardness of man's heart, but when man's heart is being humbled, God is able to draw men unto salvation through Jesus Christ.
- God does not predestine some to be saved and some to be lost. He knows the future, but gives us the choice.
- The purpose of predestination language in John's gospel is not to expose the exclusion of certain men from salvation because they were not chosen by the father, but to emphasize that from start to finish eternal life is the gift of God and does not lie under the control of men. A person who tries to gain eternal life on his own terms will find himself unable to come to Jesus because it has not been granted to Him by the Father. He has in fact been resisting the Father.

**John 6:45** *Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.*

## End Notes

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1. Quote from Herbert Lockyer - All The Doctrines of the Bible - pg. 152.
2. The Foundations of Christian Doctrine by Kevin Conner - pg. 250.
3. Quote from Henry Clarence Thiessen in Kevin Conner's Book, "Foundations of Christian Doctrine" - Pg. 248.
4. *ibid*, Kevin Conner - pg 250.
5. Quote from All the Doctrines of the Bible - Herbert Lockyer - pg 58.
6. *ibid*, Kevin Conner pg. 250.
7. *ibid*, Herbert Lockyer - pg. 153.
8. New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance - #4309.
9. *ibid*, Herbert Lockyer - All the Doctrines of the Bible - pg 153.
10. The unconditional election of individuals - A quote from Jack W. Cottrell in the book, "Grace Unlimited," chapter three, page 57, edited by Clark H. Pinnock.
11. *ibid*, Jack W. Cottrell, pg.57.
12. *ibid*, Jack W. Cottrell, pg 67.
13. *ibid*, Kevin Conner, pg 248, "The Grace of God."
14. From the essay, "Responsible freedom and the Flow of Biblical History by Clark H. Pinnock, pg. 106 in the book, "Grace Unlimited."
15. *ibid*, Clark H. Pinnock, pg 100.
16. Quote from Jay Adams in the book, "Competent to Counsel," pg 70.
17. A quote from Vernon C. Grounds from the essay, "God's Universal Salvific Grace," from the book, "Grace Unlimited," pg 29.
18. A quote from Donald M. Lake from the essay, "He Died For All: The Universal Dimensions of the Atonement." pg 41 Grace Unlimited.
19. *ibid*, Kevin Conner, pg 247.
20. *ibid*, Grace Unlimited, Clark H. Pinnock, pg 97.
21. Word Biblical Commentary on John's Gospel by George R. Beasley Murray, pg 93.
22. *ibid*, Grace Unlimited, Grant R. Osborne, Exegetical notes on Calvinist Texts, pg 172