

## 1 Peter 1 – Part I / J

**1Pe 1:1 (NKJV) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> 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.**

What we have seen in the last several weeks regarding the word “**foreknowledge**” and the only two places that it is mentioned in the New Testament ([1 Peter 1:2](#), [Acts 2:23](#)) is that God’s “**foreknowledge**” does not simply mean to know something beforehand. The theological term for that attribute of God is His “**omniscience**”. The word “**foreknowledge**”, however, represents God’s purpose and God’s specific eternal plan in doing something. [Acts 2:23](#) says,

**Ac 2:23 (NKJV) Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;**

[2 Timothy 1:9](#) declares,

**2Ti 1:9 (NKJV) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,**

God’s overall purpose in election was to provide His Son with a bride, and He was not going to leave that up to people who did not love Christ, who were spiritually dead, and who had no desire whatsoever to even know Him. So, what we found was that God does not elect someone because He knows what decision they will make, but God “**foreknows**” because He has predetermined, decreed, and ordained what will happen. In eternity past, God sovereignly purposed and decreed to elect a certain people, not because of anything good or meritorious on their part or in their life, but solely because of His good pleasure. [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) describes it this way,

**2Th 2:13 (NKJV) But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,**

So, as we continue our study on the word “**foreknowledge**”, one of the key verses that helps shed some light on the issue of “**foreknowledge**” is [Romans 8:29-30](#).

**Ro 8:29 (NKJV) 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. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

There is an implied order here – “**foreknew, predestined, called, justified, glorified**”. Please notice something very important related to these five (5) words. If you were to look at the last four (4) words, they all relate to something that God was going to do or has done – He predestined, called, justified, and glorified believers. Each verb is related directly and specifically to God’s activity and not man’s activity. Man does not predestine, call, justify, or glorify anyone or anything. In the same way, the verb “**foreknew**” in this verse is also directly related to something that God chose to do. Each of these five

(5) verbs are in the indicative mood and the aorist tense. The indicative mood is the mood of fact, the doctrinal mood, and the mood that establishes that something is actual and true. The aorist tense is the same as our past tense and represents something that has already taken place. The action of the verb has already been fully completed. We might say that it is “a done deal”. So, in simple grammatical terms, each of these five (5) verbs clearly represent something that God did in the past as a part of His election of those He chose to be His Son’s bride. These are all attributes of what God has already done. In the mind of God and in the eternal outworking of God’s “**foreknowledge**”, the activity of these verbs has already been completed and nothing can prevent them from happening. In the same way that God justifies believers and will eventually glorify them, in that same way He foreknew them – or in our understanding so far, He had a predetermined purpose and plan for them. None of these verbs are talking about what men were going to do, but about what God predetermined that He was going to do.<sup>1</sup> This is exactly why every believer possesses eternal security. In eternity past before time began and before the foundation of the world, God sovereignly purposed what would happen to us, He predestined what would salvifically occur in our life, He then called us, justified us, and one day we will all be glorified with Him. Nothing can prevent that from happening.

Now, and this is another nuance of the word in [Romans 8:29](#), but the Hebrew sense of what “**foreknew**” means is that of fixing one’s love on an individual. What we are going to discuss here is utterly amazing and spiritually staggering. The idea is not that God just knew people beforehand, but that **God fixed His love on them beforehand**. To “**foreknow**” means that God determined that He was going to fix His love on the people that He chose. God predetermined to enter into a personal saving relationship with those He chose in which His love for them would sustain them, guard them, and eternally surround their lives.<sup>2</sup> That was God’s purpose, and it was all related to His preparing a bride for His Son. Whether we realize it in a meaningful way or not, God was fully committed in His love for us before time began, before the foundation of the world. He loved us before creation even existed. That is the magnitude of God’s love for the believer. He foreknew us in a loving way before time began. He foreknew that we were to be His because He had predetermined in His purpose that we would, and so He loved us with an everlasting love before eternity existed. You personally knew that one day you would have children, and before they were ever born, you were fully committed to love them. That idea is very similar to the meaning of the word “**foreknowledge**” in [1 Peter 1:2](#). The idea of the word is that God loved us because He foreknew that one day we would be His children, and He was fully committed to loving His children. He foreknew them, He had chosen them, He would call them, He would justify them, and He would glorify them. He saw and knew all of that in His “**foreknowledge**” and because of His choice to do that in us, He placed His love on us in a way that may never be understood or even appreciated. So, because we were foreknown by God, we were also predestined, called, justified, and glorified.

If someone’s theological position is founded on the premise that Christ died for the sins of the whole world, then what that position logically means is that He has already paid the sin debt for everyone, and of necessity they must say that no one will be condemned to judgment. However, we know that not everyone is saved. Actually there is only one verse in the entire New Testament that even alludes to that position. It is [1 John 2:2](#) which says,

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

In this context, the word “**propitiation**” refers to the fact that the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ was **the only salvific act** that fully satisfied God the Father as an atonement for sin. The sacrifice of Christ is the only means by which God is willing to save the individual who believes in the atoning work of that sacrifice. Christ is the only provision for sin for anyone in the whole world. There is no one else, there is no other means, and there is no other atoning work that can satisfy God the Father. It is Christ, and Christ alone that is the “**propitiation**” or satisfaction for sin for anyone in the entire world, and His sacrifice for sin is the only salvific work which fully satisfies God the Father. However, the scope of that salvation is only made “actual” for those who believe.<sup>3</sup> That is why reformed theologians call this “limited atonement”, or that the death that Christ died only pays for those who are actually chosen by God, called by God, and justified by God. Even though the death of Christ is fully “sufficient” to pay for the sins of the whole world, it is only “effectual” for those who believe, and they can only believe if God calls them.

We would all agree that the payment that Jesus Christ made for sin was sufficient to pay for the sins of the whole world. None of us would argue that reality. So, if God had chosen to save everyone, then the death of Christ would have had no problem paying for everyone’s sin. However, if someone takes the position that Christ actually did die for the sins of the whole world, then everyone will be saved. If the death of Christ is the payment for sin and He died for the sins of the whole world, then everyone’s sins have been paid for by Christ. If you owe the bank \$1,000,000 and someone pays that debt for you, the bank cannot come to you and say that you personally owe them \$1,000,000 as well. Why? It is because your debt has been fully paid for by someone else. The bank cannot double charge you. In the same way, God cannot send someone to eternal judgment if Christ actually paid for their sins. God the Father will not say that Christ has paid your debt, but that He is still going to make you pay it as well. That would be unjust and God is never unjust.

The real issue for theologians in [Romans 8:29-30](#) has to do more with the relationship between being “**called**” and being “**justified**”. When the Bible speaks of the term “**called**”, there are two specific kinds of being called. The first is known as the external or outward call, and the second is known as the internal or inward call. Whenever the gospel is preached, everyone who hears it is being given an outward or external call. They are being summoned to Christ by the gospel. Based on the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, they may or may not respond. We know this to be true and we witness is constantly. The external call goes out and some respond to it and the majority do not. The vast majority of lost people who have heard the accurate and clear teaching of the Word of God did not come to Christ and may never come. So we know that not everyone responds positively to the external call in the preaching of the gospel. In fact, many more reject it than receive it. We certainly realize that not everyone who hears the preaching of the gospel responds in faith, so we clearly know that not everyone who is called outwardly is also called inwardly.<sup>4</sup> There is something else that must happen for salvation to occur, and it is known as the inward call of God. When the inward call of God is given, also known as the doctrine of the effectual call, the person believes and is justified, and that is what makes the atoning work of Christ effectual and actual in that person’s life. The external message of the gospel is given, the Holy Spirit regenerates them (gives life to the spiritually dead individual), and draws the individual inwardly. Coupled with the external call of the gospel, the inward call becomes spiritually effectual in their life,

and they respond by a God given faith ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) to that work of God in their life. At that moment, they are saved, adopted, justified, and glorified.

Obviously, we would never deny that God has known from all eternity who would respond to the gospel call and who would not. However, the reason that God “foreknew” who would be saved is because He knew exactly to whom He would give the inward call. Think of it this way. In all of this, God is not just some kind of passive observer who is waiting to see what will happen – not at all. God is not a spectator or a mere observer of the salvation process. In the same way that the gift of salvation was predetermined by God before time began, so it was also pre-planned who would be saved. God foreknew those individuals to whom He would give the inward call to come to Christ because He chose them to receive the inward call and be justified and saved. God foreordained the inward or effectual call. Please appreciate that the tension in this is that God does not give the inward call to everyone. The outward call of the gospel goes out to everyone, but not the inward call. This inward call is a very significant divine activity that some receive and some do not receive, and it is often defined as “irresistible grace”. So, what this doctrine clearly says is that the ultimate decision for salvation rests with God and not with man. Obviously man has a part to play in the process, but unless God actually calls that individual they cannot come. Because God’s choice precedes man’s choice, the only reason that someone chooses God is because God chose them.<sup>5</sup> Look at how [John 6:44](#) and [John 6:65](#) state this, and both of these verses are very clear in what they are saying.

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

**Jn 6:65 (NKJV) 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."**

So, the word “foreknowledge” means much more than just knowing something beforehand. The nuance of the meaning is that it is a very “selective” knowledge that God has exercised on behalf of individuals that he has made the object of His love.<sup>6</sup> The word “foreknowledge” does not therefore just refer to God having an awareness of what was going to happen, but it conveys the idea that God decided to have a predetermined relationship with those He chose to be His. In the same way that Christ was foreordained before time began to be God’s sacrifice for sin, so believers were foreordained to be God’s gift to His Son. Think of it this way. With God there are no contingencies. He does not have a back-up plan or a contingency plan if the things that He started do not work out as He determined they would. Things will progress and happen just as He has predetermined that they will. It is not like God made the world and is now just hoping that things will all turn out in a particular way. Not at all. To the contrary, God predetermined to set His love on certain people. So, “foreknowledge” is a knowledge that has a purpose behind it, and that purpose can never be frustrated. God’s preplanned and predetermined purpose for our life is the only reason that any of us have believed and repented of our sin. God foreknows what will happen because He has decreed and ordained what will happen.

## **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Boice, 145.

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, 112.

<sup>3</sup> Vine, 896-897.

<sup>4</sup> Sproul, 131.

<sup>5</sup> Sproul, 135-137.

<sup>6</sup> Berkhof, 112.

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