

FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FOREORDINATION

By E. J. Waggoner

01 "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." The word "predestinate" is the same as "foreordain," which is found in the Revised Version. Volumes of speculation have been written about the terms, but a few words are sufficient to set forth the facts. With respect to these, as well as the other attributes of God, it is sufficient for us to know the fact. With the explanation we have nothing to do.

02 That God knows all things is plainly set forth in the Scriptures. Not only does He know the things that are past, but sees the future as well. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Acts 15:18. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising; Thou understandest my thoughts afar off." Ps. 139:1, 2. Thus God can tell what men even yet unborn will do and say.

03 This does not make God responsible for the evil that men do. Some men have unwisely thought it necessary to apologize for the Lord, and to relieve Him of the charge that if He is omniscient He is responsible for the evil if He does not prevent it, by saying that He could know if he wished, but that He chooses not to know many things. Such a "defense" of God is both unwise and wicked. It assumes that God is responsible for the evil if He knew it beforehand and did not prevent it, and that in order not to be in a position to prevent it, he deliberately shuts His eyes from it. Thus their "defense" really puts the responsibility for all evil upon God. Not only so, but it limits Him. It makes Him like a man.

04 God knows all things, not by study and research, as man learns the little he knows, but because He is God. He inhabits eternity. Isa. 57:15. We can not understand how this can be any more than we can understand eternity. We must accept the fact, and be not only content, but glad, that God is greater than we. All time, past, present, and future, is the same Him. It is always with God.

05 The fact that God knew the evil that men would do, even before the foundation of the world, does not make Him responsible for it, any more than the fact that a man can see by means of a telescope what a man is doing ten miles distant, makes him responsible for that other one's actions. God has from the beginning set before men warnings against sin, and has provided them with all the necessary means for avoiding it; but He can not interfere with man's right and freedom of choice without depriving him of his manhood, and making him the same as a stick.

06 Freedom to do right implies freedom to do wrong. If a man were made so that he could not do wrong, he would have no freedom at all, not even to do right. He would be less than the brutes. There is no virtue in forced obedience, nor would there be any virtue in doing that which is right if it were impossible to do wrong. Moreover, there could be no pleasure or satisfaction in the professed friendship of two persons, if one associated with the other just because he could not avoid it. The joy in the Lord in the companionship of His people is that they of their own free-will choose Him above all others. And that which is the joy of the Lord is the joy of His people.

07 The very men who rail against God for not preventing the ills that He foresees, since He is all powerful, would be the very first to charge Him with cruelty if He did arbitrarily interfere with their freedom, and make them to do that which they do not choose. Such a course would make everybody unhappy and discontented. The wisest thing for men to do is to stop trying to fathom the ways of the Almighty, and accept the fact that whatever He does is right. "As for God, His way is perfect." Ps.

Predestination

08 The text shows that "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among brethren." God's thought toward men are thoughts of peace, and not of evil. Jer. 29:11. He ordains peace for men. Isa. 26:12. We read nothing about men being foreordain to destruction; the only thing that God has predestined is that men should be conformed to the image of His Son.

09 But it is only in Christ that we become conformed to His image. It is in Christ that we come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Eph. 4:13. Therefore it is that men are foreordain or predestined only in Christ. The whole story is told in the following passage of Scripture:—

10 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good-pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

11 Everything is in Christ. We receive all spiritual blessings in Him; we are chosen in Him unto holiness; in Him we are predestined unto the adoption of children; in Him are we accepted; and in Him we have redemption through His blood. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:9.

12 That is God's purpose and foreordination concerning man. Still further, "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Whom did He foreknow?— There can be no limit; He must have foreknown all. If there were any exception,

then God would not be infinite in knowledge. If He foreknows one person, then He foreknows every person. There has not been a person born into the world whose birth God did not foreknow. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Therefore, since every person has been known to God, even before the foundation of the world, and those whom He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, it follows that God has purposed salvation for every soul that has ever come into the world. His love embraces all, without respect of persons.

13 "Then everybody will be saved, no matter what he does," some will say. Not by all means. Remember that the purpose of God is in Christ. It is only in Him that we are predestined. And we are free to choose for ourselves whether we will accept Him or not. Man's will has been forever set free, and God Himself will not presume to interfere with it. He holds the choice and will of each individual sacred. He will not carry out His own purpose contrary to man's will. His will is to give man whatever man decides will best please him. So He sets before man life and death, good and evil, and tells him to choose which he will have. God knows what is best, and has chosen and prepared that for man. He has gone so far as to fix it beyond all possibility of failure, so that man shall have that good thing if he chooses it. But the wonderful kindness and courteousness of the great God is seen in this, that He defers in everything to man's wishes. If man, in his turn, will but defer to God's wishes, there will be the most delightful and loving companionship between them.

Called, Justified, Glorified.

14 "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." This is completed action. We need not stumble over it, if we will

but remember that everything is in Christ. In Christ we have already been blessed with all spiritual blessings. All men are called to that which God has prepared for them, but none are "called according to His purpose," unless they have made their calling and election sure by submitting to His Will. Such ones are predestined to be saved. Nothing in the universe can hinder the salvation of any soul that accepts and trusts the Lord Jesus Christ.

15 And all such are justified. The death of Christ reconciles men to God. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2. His death has secured pardon and life for all. Nothing can keep them from salvation except their own perverse will. Men must take themselves out of hand of God, in order to be lost. Much more, then, those who accept the sacrifice, are justified. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

16 "And whom He justified, them He also glorified." Have we not read in the prayer of Christ for His disciples, not only for those who were with Him in the garden, but also for all them that should believe on Him through their word, and therefore for us, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them"? Peter said that he was a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. God has left nothing undone. Everything that Christ has we have if we accept Him. All that remains is that it should be revealed. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." When God asks concerning His people, "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" who shall presume to say that there is something that He has overlooked?

All Things Ours.

17 But we have anticipated the apostle. Hear him: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

18 "How shall He not?" That is, How can He avoid giving us all things? In giving Christ for and to us, God could not do otherwise than give us all things, "for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Col. 1:16, 17, R.V.

19 "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. 3:21-23. This, then, answers the question, "Who can be against us?" Everything is for us. "All things for your sakes." 2 Cor. 4:15.

20 A general once telegraphed to the seat of government, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours." This is what every child of God is privileged to say. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:57. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4, R. V. This is what makes us know that all things work together for good to them that love God. No matter how dark and forbidding the things may seem, if we are in Christ, they are for us, and not against us. ❖

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