

The Ordo Salutis

The Order of Salvation

A Study

As of: 1/31/2021

Step 2: The Foreknowledge of God

Deuteronomy 7:7&8a

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you ...

Here, God says that He did NOT choose His people because **“you were more in number than any of the peoples”**. Now this phrase has to do with some Quality or Attribute that His people possessed. In other words, there was nothing inherent in the people; nor was there anything that they did- that caused them to be attractive to God; or that caused God to “set His Love upon them”.

Okay, so, why did God “set His Love” on His people? For a very simple reason: **“because the Lord loved you.”** Now this is NOT “circle-reasoning”- but it is the only hint in the entire Bible that details WHY God “set His Love” on His people. And the way we should understand this is:

The Lord... set His Love on you... because the Lord loved you.

So, one way to understand this- is that God loved His people. And the result of Him loving them- was that God “set His Love” upon them. Or, God “set His Love” upon a people. And the result was that He loved them. But which came *first*: God “setting His Love” upon a people- or God loving them? We actually don’t know. But this “Act” of God- “setting His Love” upon certain people (to save them) is what Foreknowledge is.

Another way to try to grasp Foreknowledge is to see how God spoke about Jacob and Esau.

Malachi 1:2&3a

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau ...

Now this Passage instructs us on how *unique* God’s Love really is. God’s Love for us- is NOT best understood by comparing it with the love that a Father has for his son; or in how a mother loves her child; or in how a soldier loves his country. Those are wonderful and precious examples of “human love”.

But God’s Love is BEST understood as Him doing for us- what is necessary (Salvation) - to allow us to love Him. So, us, being given the privilege and honor of loving God- is the very BEST thing that God can do for any unworthy sinner.

Yet here, God's Foreknowledge in "setting His Love" upon Jacob didn't stop with Jacob. God showed His Foreknowledge for Jacob by Him also "hating" Esau. So, Foreknowledge worked in Jacob's favor (as God "set His Love upon him"); while the very *same* Foreknowledge worked to Esau's Damnation.

In other words, to fully understand God's Foreknowledge in "setting His Love" on Jacob *requires* that we also consider God's "hating" of Esau. And to do that- requires that we understand:

- Both Jacob and Esau were wicked sinners
- Neither one of them loved God (until God's Love was "set on" Jacob.)
- Both of these men *deserved* eternal Damnation
- Neither one had *earned* God's Favor (by *anything* they had done).
- Even though they were brothers- God "loved" the one and "hated" the other

So, we must consider that the Foreknowledge of God toward Jacob (in God "setting His Love" on him) was carried out in "Eternity Past"- meaning that it was done:

- Before God created the Universe
- Before Jacob or Esau were born
- Before either one had done anything "Good" or "Bad"

... and God did it this way- so that no human could boast and so that God would receive all the Glory.

So, God loved Jacob for no other reason than He loved him. Okay, but *why* did God "hate" Esau? We don't know. All we know is that He did. So, to clarify this- we must understand:

- Esau was NOT more sinful than Jacob
- Jacob was NOT more Righteous than Esau
- Jacob was just as fallen as Esau
- Jacob deserved God's hatred as much as Esau
- God was NOT obligated to "set His Love" on Jacob
- God did NOT force Esau to sin

God *voluntarily* chose to "set His Love" on Jacob; even as He *voluntarily* chose to leave Esau to himself (hate). And the deciding factor as to why God loved Jacob and hated Esau is found in God's Own Personal Prerogative- God's Own "free-Will Choice".

Now, by definition, for God to "set His Love" upon *some* unworthy sinners- also means that God purposefully did NOT set His Love on all. And God NOT setting His Love on the others- while "leaving them to themselves"- is what "hating" people looks like.

We need to try to understand that God doesn't have to do *anything* for people to go to Hell. Since the Fall- all of Humanity is conceived in their mother's womb- lost and in hostile rebellion to God. So, if God simply "steps aside" and leaves them to themselves- they will *automatically* "love Darkness rather than Light"; they will NEVER repent; they will NEVER believe the Gospel; they will NEVER find the fullness of their Joy in God; and they will NEVER be saved.

And the End result for ALL that God leaves alone- is that they will spend all of Eternity in a devil's Hell. This is what the Bible means when it says that God hated them.

Nobody is formed in the womb with a love for God and a desire to enjoy God forever. That is what God- "setting His Love" (Foreknowledge) on people gives to them. This is what the Apostle John meant when he said,

1John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

Nobody possesses a love for God in themselves. And we simply cannot *manufacture* a love for God through our "will-power" or based on some choice or decision we make. Only by God sovereignly *giving* us a love for Him- will any of us ever love God. And the result of this is- no lost person loves God. So, God "setting His Love" on us (Foreknowledge)- is the *basis* our love for God. So, how we need to understand this is:

Our love *for* God- is a gracious Gift *from* God.

Romans 8:26-32

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Romans 11:1-5

I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? "Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE." But what is the divine response to him? "I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice.

Foreknowledge: The Act of God whereby He understands or knows, fully and completely, all things- Past, Present, and Future- in their entirety- *including* the willful choices of all peoples. This Understanding and Knowledge is intricately interwoven with God's Decree (Step 1); and Sovereign Election/Predestination (Step 3); and results in the determined "setting" of His Love upon those sinners God chose to save.

... and one of the *best* ways to understand “Foreknowledge” is to understand what the Apostle Paul taught in **Romans 8:29** that says:

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

So, my Goal is to help us all understand the four parts of this Verse:

1. The connection of **Romans 8:29&30** with verse 28.
"FOR those whom He foreknew . . . "
2. The meaning of God's Foreknowledge.
"For those whom He FOREKNEW, He also predestined . . . "
3. The Goal of Predestination for our Good.
" . . . to become conformed to the image of His Son . . . "
4. The Goal of Predestination for the Glory of Jesus.
" . . . so that He would be the first-born among many brethren."

1. The Connection Between Romans 8:29&30 with Verse 28

Romans 8:28- 30

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Now the "For" (or Because) in Verse 29 indicates that verses 29&30 are the Foundation for verse 28. They give reasons why we can KNOW that “all things” will work together for “Good”- for those who love God and who are called according to God's Purpose.

It appears that what verses 29&30 do is unfold the implications of the phrase in verse 28, "**called according to His purpose.**"

- verse 29 unfolds the **PURPOSE**
- verse 30 unfolds the **CALL**

Four Reasons for Providing the Foundation

So, why is it so important for Paul to give such a deep Foundation for this Promise? Four Reasons:

1.1. To be the Freest of All People

There are few Promises anywhere in the Bible that have brought more Comfort and Strength to God's people over the centuries than Romans 8:28. If we can be sure, in our deepest heart of hearts, that this Promise is true, then we will be the freest of all people. And in that Freedom of HOPE- we will love one another and will shine like Lights in a dark world- fearlessly.

Hope is the most practical Power in the world. It overcomes Discouragement and Depression and Irritability and Anxiety and even Suicide. It gives new life to old jobs and old Marriages and old friendships and even old Churches. It opens the future and invites Vision and Dreams and Planning and Prayer. It conquers Lust and Greed and vain Ambition, because these are just short- term Substitutes for people, who have lost Hope in something really Great and Beautiful and Satisfying in their lives.

Therefore, Paul does not shrink back from giving us a deep Foundation for this greatest of all Promises. And that Foundation is **Romans 8:29&30**. Now the Pillars of the Foundation are the great Doctrines of "Election" and "Predestination" along with "Effectual Calling" and "Justification" and "Glorification". The reason these things are important to know and love is that they are the Foundation of all the New Covenant Blessings we cherish.

1.2. To Avoid a Small and Distorted Vision of God

But even more, if we do not know these Doctrines of Grace, our Vision of God will be small and disfigured. And when our Vision of God is small and distorted, the attempt to see all of life in relation to God is frustrated- and we retreat with our little God into a "religious subculture" instead of confronting the cultural and intellectual life of our day and laying claim to all Truth as the "bought and paid for Territory" of our majestic God.

1.3. To Prevent Triviality in Worship

Within the Church, genuine "Spirit and Truth Worship" suffers the "Bain of Triviality" when we do not know, love, and enjoy the God, Who "sets His Love" on unworthy sinners to save them. Is this not the deepest explanation for the disappearance of heart Reverence in our day? There is a strong connection between the absence of true and powerful Worship and the absence of the Knowledge of the Rights; Freedom; and Power of God.

1.4. Because It Is God's Word

Ultimately, this is all that matters. Foreknowledge is in the Bible. It is a biblical term. So, if we seek to be honest about the Bible- we have to deal with Foreknowledge- at least on *some* level and to *some* degree.

2. The Meaning of God's "Foreknowledge"

Romans 8:29a

For those whom He foreknew...

2.1. Two Possibilities

God foreknows all things and ALL PEOPLE in one sense:

Isaiah 46:9b&10

**9 ...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'**

... yet not all people are predestined to be conformed to His Son (Jesus). Therefore, both the "foreknowing" and the "predestinating" of God *MUST* be *qualified* in *some* sense, because Paul says,

Romans 8:29a

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ...

... where the context is:

For [all of] those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son ...

But there are two ways to *qualify* or *limit* the idea of God's foreknowing:

CHOICE #1: We could add a phrase like, "*would believe on Jesus,*" to help clarify **Romans 8:29**- so that it reads:

"For all of those He foreknew would believe on Jesus- He also predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son."

In other words, in order to preserve the "Self-determining Power of Man" in his own Salvation, God simply predestines people only on the basis of Faith which God "foresees" that certain people will produce- by their own inherent Self-determining Power. And in this Choice- "Foreknowledge" is *radically* reduced to be *ONLY* that God "saw" or "knew" who would be saved- but didn't actually do *anything* to make that happen.

CHOICE #2: Make no additions at all, but construe the word "foreknew" in Romans 8:29 to refer to that special *kind* of "knowing" in Scripture which signifies Choice; Acknowledgement; and Favor. In other words, Choice #2 allows us to interpret the Foreknowledge of God as virtually *synonymous* with His Election.

Arguments for the Second Choice

1. While it is not impossible that Paul might want us to supply extra words to make sense out of his sentence, it would seem better not to insist on adding a whole phrase if the meaning of the

verse is plain and coherent with the context without adding any extra words. The text simply says,

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ...

... or to shorten it:

... those ... He [God] foreknew, He ... predestined ...

... as though the idea of “foreknowing” contained its *own* limitation. If we find elsewhere in the Bible and especially in Paul that “knowing” can carry its own limited sense, then the addition of other phrases would be unnecessary.

But the Man-made doctrine of “Human Self-Determination” (Choice #1) is eventually defeated anyway because Paul went on to say in verse 30:

and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So, the sequence in Paul’s logic is crystal clear:

1. All those whom God foreknew- He predestined
2. All those whom God predestined- He called
3. All those whom God called- He justified
4. All those whom God justified- He glorified

... and so, I suggest that the ONLY reason that most people have a problem with this understanding of Foreknowledge- is NOT because they have honestly examined the verse (as we have just done)- but rather because the normal and natural Conclusion to which people arrive (at what Paul clearly teaches here)- *conflicts* (greatly) with their own *preconceived* ideas of Who God is and What God will or will not do for Man- in Salvation.

But by *anyone’s* measurement- engaging in that logic is simply NOT applying the concept of “Sola Scriptura”¹ to how we formulate Doctrine. But, at the same time, it IS engaging in the “Eisegesis of the Scriptures” (putting into the Scriptures what we want them to say) and is the formulation of “Man-made Doctrine” which is, by definition, FALSE Doctrine.

If all the “called” are justified; and if Justification is only “by Faith ALONE”, then the Call of God (“for” and “to” that individual) MUST secure the Faith of that individual- precisely because Faith is what *secures* the Justification. Yet if the Call of God brings about Faith- then it CANNOT be that the Self-Determining Power of Man brings him to Salvation.

Therefore, even if God did base His Predestination on a Faith that He simply “foresaw” (saw in the future), we cannot stop there. Because that would also mean that the FAITH that God simply saw or knew about in the future- was, in fact, a Faith which He Himself INTENDED to *create* in that person! And that would bring about the complete *collapse* of the Concept of “Foreknown Faith” as used by most people- because it still leaves us with the Freedom and the

¹ The Concept of “Sola Scriptura” is that ALL Teaching; All Doctrine; ALL Counselling; and ALL Reproof; Rebuke; and Encouragement MUST come “from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures ALONE”

Right of God- to elect or choose whomever He will call- *effectually*- into Faith. In other words, for God to predestine someone on the basis of Faith- WHICH HE HIMSELF CREATES- is IDENTICAL as basing Predestination on the basis of Election.

The words "know" and "foreknow" commonly mean "choose" or "set Love on" or "acknowledge." Therefore, we really don't need to add any phrase to *limit* whom God foreknows, because the word itself limits the group: it is those whom God chose or set His Love on. Here are some verses and Passages to prove *this* meaning of "foreknowing."

Romans 11:1&2a

1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew...

Amos 3:1&2a

1 Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:

2 "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth ...

Gen 18:17-19

17 The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?

19 "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Hosea 13:4&5

4 Yet I have been the Lord your God Since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me, For there is no savior besides Me.

5 I cared for you in the wilderness, In the land of drought.

Note: the phrase, "I cared for you in the wilderness" in verse 5 may also be rendered "I knew you and therefore, I cared for you in the wilderness"

Psalm 1:6

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

Matthew 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

1Corinthians 8:3

but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

Galatians 4:8&9

8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

2Timothy 2:16-19

16 But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness,

17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

18 men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

Conclusion: "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined" means that God's sovereign Appointment of the eternal Destiny of His people is based on His prior Election, and this Election is not based on some "Foreseen Faith" that we could produce by some power of "Self-Determination". The Plan of Redemption was never conceived to include the saving power of "Human Self-Determination"- but it rests solely in the Absolute Sovereignty of God.

