

The Golden Chain 7?

“The Foreknown”

Romans 8:26-30

TEXT/INTRO: When my daddy was 15 years old, he went with his family to a family reunion in Waxhaw, N.C., and saw a beautiful young girl there he was immediately smitten with. And, no, this is not a redneck family reunion joke, it’s for real. He told one of his male cousins, “I’m gonna marry that girl.” Now, remember this was a family reunion. Daddy didn’t think about the chance that she might be kin. Well, he courted this young girl and they eventually got married with the consent of both sets of parents. No one bothered to tell daddy that this cute little girl he had just married was his second cousin. And many, many years later it shocked me to find out my parents were cousins. But what are ya gonna do. My grandparents who foreknew what was coming took no steps to stop the marriage or discourage it. Ya know the part of the old marriage ceremonies where the minister would ask, “does anyone have a reason why these two should not be joined in holy matrimony. Speak now or forever hold your peace?” Apparently, they saw no reason why these two should not be united in marriage. Thus, I’m able to be with you here this morning.

The title of my sermon this morning is “**The Foreknown.**” The topic this morning is one of those mysterious works of God that the student of the word of God will have to dig into to understand. And we can understand it. So, turn in your Bibles to Romans 8:28-30 *repeat.

There’s a lot about God that we’ll never figure out and that’s because He’s God and we’re not. And I can live with that. God intentionally designed the intricacies of His work of creation along with most of what He continues to do to the realm of “*secret things,*” **except for the things He has revealed to His children.**

This is from Deuteronomy chapter 29, ²⁹ *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe, or keep or live by, all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29 NAU)*

And this, from the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 3, ¹¹ *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. (Eccl. 3:11 NAU)*

There's just some stuff God clearly doesn't want us to know. **But** we can know more than we want to know. I would say that most churchgoers don't want to know very much. And to tell you the truth, while I find that fact sad, those who belong to God through faith in Jesus aren't saved because of how much they know, but by the grace of God and whom they know, not how much they know. Biblical illiteracy is not something to be proud of, but it certainly doesn't condemn anyone.

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the 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. (Rom. 8:28-30 NAU)*

There is a logical flow of thought in those three verses which is the way Paul thought and the way he expressed his thoughts in his letters. That is, it's logical to the student of the word and the disciple of Christ.

One concept we can now understand through the spirit of wisdom and revelation is that of **foreknowledge**. You may recall Paul's prayer for the Ephesian saints where he prayed that God might give them "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,*" that being Jesus. We can know much more than we want to know. We only have to be attuned to the Spirit of God and in love with the written word.

This is what I have gleaned from studying the Greek word for "foreknowledge." It means to "know beforehand or in advance through personal familiarity." That's it. And it implies the omniscience of God.

It's to foreknow as only God can foreknow. It's what God knew before anything was created. And it absolutely is not based on God

looking ahead to see who would choose to believe on His Son or who would earn God's favor.

Let's pretend for a moment that God did look down "the corridors of time" as some have erroneously taught and still do, and see what He would have seen.

²⁸ *And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,*

²⁹ *being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,*

³⁰ *slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,*

³¹ *without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;*

³² *and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Rom. 1:28-32 NAU)*

¹⁰ *as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;*

¹¹ *THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;*

(Rom. 3:10-11 NAU)

¹⁹ *Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,*

²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,*

²¹ *envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21 NAU)*

¹¹ *Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh...*

¹² remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:11-12 NAU)

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph. 2:1-3 NAU)

What God would have seen were He looking for candidates for His kingdom and the church of His Son, would be that no one would ever even think of coming to Him. There is none who seeks after God.

By the grace of God, everyone who is in Christ belongs to an elite group of people, “the foreknown.” Not an “elitist” group but to a called-of-God group who have no right to be in that group.

First, foreknowledge is exclusively the realm of God and not man. That rules out fortune tellers and Tarot Card readers and so-called “mind readers.” Those are “parlor tricks,” one and all ¹¹ *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, (1 Cor. 2:9-12 NAU)

God foreknew and we now know.

Second, foreknowledge is not based on our foreseen good deeds or our decision to believe on Jesus.

⁸ *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,*

⁹ *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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*

¹⁰ *but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*

¹¹ *for which I was appointed a preacher (2 Tim. 1:8-11 NAU)*

God called us before time began and that rules out even the possibility that we were saved because we are good people doing good things.

Third, foreknowledge is not futuristic but a present reality in the mind of God from eternity past. Foreknowledge is not a prediction.

God and only God can foreknow people who do not yet exist. He has known all who are to be saved from before time began, before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:3-4;³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love (Eph. 1:3-4 NAU)*

Fourth and finally, foreknowledge makes our relationship with God personal and intimate and eternal.

¹⁵ *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15 NAU)*

In Jesus' name, amen.