

DOES FOREKNOWLEDGE EXPLAIN ELECTION?

by

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The term 'Election' occurs frequently in the New Testament, referring to God's choice of some for salvation. All Christians hold to a doctrine of election since it is a biblical word. The notion of God choosing some for salvation and not others is so clear throughout the entire Bible that no serious student of Scripture denies it. Contention occurs, however, when we ask what is basis of God's choice?

Two answers exist within the Christian community. The first view holds that Election has no basis whatever in man. It is a mystery, hidden forever in God's sovereign will. Though God is not arbitrary in his decrees, nevertheless the decree of Election is a righteous one since no one deserves salvation anyway.

This view is frequently called 'Reformed', because it was prominent during the Reformation period and is held today by those churches who identify their theology as 'Reformed.' The second view claims divine 'foreknowledge' as the basis for Election. God supposedly looks into the future and notices who will accept Christ and 'elects' those.

This view is normally called 'Arminian', after the Dutch pastor in the 16th century, Arminius, who invented the doctrine toward the end of the Reformation period. Because the meaning of foreknowledge, when used of divine decisions, it carries the connotation of 'appointed.' It therefore means something like 'foreordained' in connection with Election. It is the person who is 'foreknown', or 'appointed' to salvation, not some quality in the person. The evidence is:

Foreknowledge was determinative and not merely predictive in the coming of Christ.

1. Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, ..." Here, "determined purpose" and "foreknowledge" are linked by a greek grammatical form called the Granville-Sharp Rule. This makes the two nouns synonymous for emphasis, like saying "right and good" or "evil and wrong." The word "determined" here is formed of the same verb from which "predestination" is derived. Peter declares the coming of Christ was both arranged and appointed by God.

2.I Peter 1:20, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world..." The word "foreordained" here is PROGINOSKO - "foreknow". Note that in the case of Christ that God's foreknowledge was more than merely predictive.

It would be absurd to say that the Father merely "foreknew" the coming of Christ. Jesus was appointed to the office of Christ. All circumstances relating to His coming were arranged in advance. History was made for Him, not He for history. 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. The same principles apply to the election of the believer.

A favorite text of opponents to Election is I Peter 1:2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father....." (verse 2). "Foreknowledge" in verse 3 and "foreordained" in verse 20 are the same word, and mean the same thing. In verse 20, it refers to Jesus himself in his appointment as redeemer. In verse 2 it also refers to an appointment, in this case of believers appointed to obedience. (Notice he says *for obedience*, not *because of obedience*.) Peter wishes all to understand that God has appointed the elect for obedience just as he appointed Jesus as redeemer. Any other interpretation fails to explain the usage of the same word in the same context, and would create an absurdity with regard to Christ.

Foreknowledge means "foreordained" with regard to Israel, because God ignored Israel's persistent rebellion.

Romans 11:2 "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew".

What was it that God "foreknew" about the Jews? That they would respond favorably to Him by their free will? Hardly! Notice the context.

"But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My Hands to a disobedient and contrary people.'" Romans 10:21 If the foreknowledge view were correct, then God should have rejected the Jews as candidates for Election. Foreseen obedience had nothing to do with God's election of Israel.

1. Lexicon Evidence: 1.Foreknowledge: The Greek terms are PROGINOSKO (verb: to know or ordain before hand) and PROGINOSIS (noun: foreknowledge or foreordination).

It is common for words in any language to have two or more meanings, usually a primary meaning and then a secondary. Such is the case with

PROGINOSIS. The primary is "foreknowledge", the secondary is "foreordination". How do we distinguish the difference? It is "foreordained" when Divine appointments and activity are in view, as in the above scriptures. This holds true also to our appointments as believers to the office and function of God's elect.

1. Gingrich's Shorter Lexicon: PROGINOSKO: Know beforehand or choose beforehand.

2. Newman's Greek-English Dictionary: PROGINOSKO: know already; choose from the beginning, choose beforehand.

4. Louw & Nida: PROGINOSKO: Know beforehand or Chose beforehand. There exists no good quality in man to foresee.

The foreknowledge view normally asserts that God foresees one of several qualities in man which attract His grace.

Was it faith He foresaw? Hardly! Faith itself is a work of grace based on election according to Acts 13:47. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 18:27 those who had believed through grace; Jesus Christ himself is the source of our faith. 1Tim. 1:14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Was it perhaps our sanctification that God foresaw? It depends on who does the sanctifying. According to Jude 1, God the Father does it. To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Circular reasoning would come into play here if foreknowledge of our sanctification were the cause of election.

What about a willing heart? Paul explicitly denies this in Romans 9:16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. Could some goodness or righteousness in man be the quality God foresaw? Paul goes to great lengths in Romans 3 to kill this notion. There is none who does good, no, not one." "There is none righteous, no, not one;" V.10 "There is none who does good, no, not one." V.12 Was it because God foresaw some would seek him and some would not? "There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God." Ro.3:11 It is persons God foresees (appoints), not some good quality in them. Because foreknowledge does not tempt people to blame God for unfairness. Any doctrine which fails to do this must be rejected according to Romans 9:19-20.

The very reason why many accept foreknowledge as an explanation of Election is actually strong reason for rejecting it. We call this a 'paradox

proof.' Its intent is to refute the other view, but it refutes itself instead. Foreknowledge does not lead a person to ask "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" verse 19 NIV. If Paul felt that foreknowledge were a factor, then why didn't he say so instead of concluding that it is none of man's business to ask such questions? "But who are you, Oh man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me like this? Verse 20 NIV. To discover which of these two viewpoints, foreknowledge or Election, is the correct one, we need only to ask ourselves which of these two seems to be the least "fair", and we have the correct one.

The Arminian foreknowledge view perverts the literal meaning of Election.

1."Election" means chosen of God, not chosen of self. Many verses confirm this such as: Mark 13:20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days." I Thessalonians 1:4 "knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God." Colossians 3:12 "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved," Titus 1:1 "...according to the faith of God's elect..." The foreknowledge view renders meaningless the scriptural examples of Election which the Apostles gave to prove the sovereignty of God's choice.

Examples: 1.The 7000 who did not bow the knee to Baal. Romans 11: 4-5 "But what does the divine response say to him? 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Notice that God did not merely "find" 7000. He "reserved" them. It was He who was in charge of their choosing, not they themselves. Paul uses this incident as an example of election by grace. If this is not the intent of the passage, then what purpose does the illustration serve? 1.Jacob and Esau. Romans 9:11- "(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls)," The notion of self-election is absurd.

Foreknowledge assumes that man's will is free with regard to his ability to accept Christ and submit to God's law. The Bible denies this. 1.Man's will is bound in sin and cannot submit to God without His grace.

Romans 3:11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 9:16 "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." 1.Coming to Christ is a gift of the Father.

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me,..." John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; John 17:9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours." 1. Faith is a gift from God, not something generated by the believer's own will.

Romans 12:3 "...as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. " Philippians 1:29 "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake," Hebrews 12:2, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,..." 1. Repentance is a gift, not something man is able to generate in himself without grace.

Acts 11:18 "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." II Timothy 2:25 "...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,..." Foreknowledge renders the term "predestination" meaningless. It makes it passive rather than the active verb that it is.

"Predestination" is the greek word PROORIZO. PRO means "before" and "ORIZO" means to establish boundaries. Thus it means "to establish the boundaries beforehand". God set up the limitations of the circumstances surrounding our lives to ensure the fulfillment of our foreordination as the Elect.

If God merely "foreknew" who would accept Him, why would He to set up any limits beforehand? This proves the choices were His and not ours.

"Foreordain" refers to our appointment as His elect, whereas "Predestinate" refers to the outworking of God's elective decree.

Do the following verses sound passive? Ephesians 1:5 "having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will," 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." Romans 8:29 merits special comment. The term "foreknew" here carries the meaning of "foreordain" because of the context. In verse 28 Paul has just explained that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose. But what is the grounds for believing this? God has already done His appointing and preparing before the world began, to ensure the accomplishment of our salvation. That's why we can believe that everything works together for our good. The Lexicon of Louw & Nida translate this verse

as: 'those whom he had chosen beforehand, he had already decided should become like his Son' Ro 8:29.

Foreknowledge assumes that God is either unwilling or unable to transgress the limits of man's will.

Bible examples to the contrary are: 1.Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 4:28-35 As a result of this Babylonian king's pride, God removed his sanity for seven years, his reason, "free will" and all. Did God ask permission to do this? Nebuchadnezzar learned that "...He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?" 1.The Antichrist and the Ten Nations. Rev.17:17 "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled." 2.The Egyptians, "And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen." Exodus 14:17 1.The Kings of the Earth. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." Proverbs 21:1 Foreknowledge puts the ultimate choice on man rather than God, which the Scriptures categorically deny.

Romans 9:16 "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you..." Foreknowledge implies that God's control over all things is merely passive rather than active.

Isaiah 46:10 "My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure," Philippians 3:21 "...according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself..." Hebrews 1:3 "...upholding all things by the word of His power." Foreknowledge assumes that faith precedes election. This is an error.

1.We believe because we are His sheep. It is not our faith that makes us sheep. John 10:26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep,..."

2.Ordaining to eternal life comes before faith, not vice versa. Acts 13:48 And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

3.The promise of salvation is available only to as many as the Lord calls. Acts 2:39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

4. Jesus reveals the Father to those whom He wills to do so.

Matthew 12:27 "...and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." 1. See John 5:21, 6:37, 44, 45, 65; 17:6, 9, 11, 20.

On Romans 8:29

In the context, *foreknow* refers to God's elect people, those whom God knows are going to be saved. This is confirmed by the same usage in Romans 11:2, referring to his chosen people, Israel. *No ha desechado Dios a su pueblo, al cual desde antes conoció.*

Notice Romans 8:28 speaks of a special purpose for those whom he has called to salvation. That purpose is to conform them to the *image of Christ*. This means spiritual maturity, which Paul calls in other places, *sanctification*.

The term predestination in V.29 therefore refers more to the arrangement of circumstances necessary for them to come to maturity rather than to salvation itself. Paul is answering the implied question as to why God allows negative circumstances in our lives. He is making it clear that these things are not random. They lead to a divinely appointed goal, being conformed to the image of Christ.

This spiritual maturity is guaranteed because it is based on God's sovereign call, not on our own abilities.

Conclusion: The term foreknowledge supports the doctrine of sovereign election rather than explains it away. When used regarding divine activity, especially in connection with election, it refers to the appointment of a person rather than the result of a divine attraction to a positive quality in the person. The Bible teaches election by the sovereign grace of God, without regard to any foreseen condition in man.