

# Foreknowledge of God the Father (Quality: Average)

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Date: 01 January 1900

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     The first epistle of Peter, chapter 1, at verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. 2. The strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.
- Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. Now, these opening words of this epistle tell us something about the author, and they tell us also something about the people to whom he is writing.
- We've drawn the obvious conclusion that the people who received this epistle were Christian people. And we've begun to think about the particular terms that are employed to describe just who they were.
- On the one hand, strangers and pilgrims. On the other hand, the elect of God. Paradox, contradiction, so it may seem.
- [ 1 : 19 ]     Pilgrims with all the uncertainty, the elect with all the certainty. And then we've also begun to look at the apostles' explanation of how they, and we, and any man, became, becomes, is a Christian.
- How is a man elect? How is a man a Christian? Well, says Peter, there are three things you've got to remember. First, it's according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.
- It's through sanctification of the Spirit. And it is unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. From these things we've drawn certain general truths, bearing in mind that the apostles' main object in writing is to comfort, distressed pilgrim Christians.
- The comfort that he presents, the comfort that he offers, is the comfort of the truth. The comfort that comes from the triune living God.
- It is a comfort that is entirely and exclusively born of free and sovereign grace. In other words, you could put it like this and say, the greatest possible comfort available to a Christian man in distress, in sorrow, on pilgrimage.
- [ 2 : 52 ]     He's just the sheer fact that he is a Christian. For there's nothing greater on earth than that for a sinful man. Well, now, we must go on and we must look at these three great terms that are here introduced.
- We must look at them one by one. Foreknowledge, sanctification, the sprinkling of the blood. It is so easy to read these terms.
- And because we've read them so often before, assume we know all there is to be known about them. And in that way, to miss the real marrow of the teaching and the real comfort of the doctrine.
- So then, let us look this afternoon at this fact. We are told that men become Christians according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

Now, this, I suppose, is one of the most neglected and misunderstood aspects of all biblical teaching. It is also one of the most fiercely contested and controverted doctrines of Holy Scripture.

[ 4 : 14 ] The foreknowledge of God the Father. It is opposed by some because they suppose that it delegates from the initiative of the freedom of man.

And man, not God, is the consideration of greatest importance in their minds. One thing most certainly attributable to the neglect, to the denial of the glorious doctrine of God's foreknowledge is the appalling lack of comfort that professedly Christian people find in their religion.

But then a gospel that rests only on a human decision, a gospel that rests only on a human initiative, not surprisingly leaves people open to whims and fancies and feelings and emotions which are pure natural, but which, alas, are so commonly and so mistakenly mistaken for Christian comfort.

Well, my friends, if you're prepared to take God's word as it stands, I have a word of strong consolation for you this afternoon.

If you're not ready to take God's word as it stands, then I've nothing to say to you. The foreknowledge of God the Father.

[ 5 : 57 ] What is this foreknowledge? Well, there are two ways of finding the meaning of any word, any term, especially a leading term like this.

one is to turn to the dictionary. The other is to study the way in which the term is used in literature.

We shall use both ways. Let me stress the importance of this, because there is a school of thought that assumes that it can determine the teaching of Holy Scripture solely by reference to dictionaries and lexicals.

Ah, they say, well, it meant that to the Greeks, so that's what it means to the Christians. Oh. It doesn't follow. It doesn't follow. For one thing, New Testament Greek is not the same thing as classical Greek.

The New Testament was written in Koine, or common Greek, which is a variant, if you like, but certainly a definite variant of the old Greek language.

[ 7 : 17 ] And because a thing meant a certain thing to the Greeks who were pagans, that word taken up and used by divinely inspired writers in Holy Scripture does not mean of necessity that it means exactly the same in the hands of an inspired writer.

So I say, this school of thought that you can settle everything out of dictionaries and lexicons is not to be followed fervently.

That is not sufficient for the simple reason that language is a living thing. And language and terms change their meaning according to the times, according to the man who uses the terms, and it is essential to know not only what the dictionary says, but how the biblical writers use the terms in their context.

But let us begin with the dictionary. Let us begin with the dictionary. The foreknowledge of God the Father.

Foreknowledge means in its basic and most simple sense to know before. To know beforehand. To know in advance.

[ 8 : 40 ] In point of fact, the Greek word that is so translated and rendered means something rather more than this. It means something much more stronger than this.

The word in the Greek that is rendered here foreknowledge is the word that is also anglicized in our English word prognosis. And prognosis in medicine is the expectation of how a case will run its course according to what is known of the disease and according to what is known of the patient.

The future prospects the prognosis the knowing in advance. By definition at very minimum then the foreknowledge of God is God's knowing in advance.

and that of necessity must be a part of God's omniscience. Scripture credits God with the attribute of all knowledge.

Omniscience omni all science knowledge all knowledge God knows everything. Acts words thoughts past present future You remember how the psalmist puts it his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth.

[ 10 : 22 ] There is nothing of which God is not aware. He is omniscient and because he is omniscient inevitably he knows the future as well as the present and as well as the past.

God's foreknowledge means that he has this total knowledge with respect to the future.

This of course is the basis of predictive prophecy. this is how God can inspire a prophet and tell Jeremiah or Amos or David or any of the Old Testament prophets to predict certain things to come to pass in the future because God foret knows knows beforehand that those things will come to pass.

God says Messiah shall come because he knows that this is to be the case. God foretells that Jerusalem shall be overthrown shall be trodden down of the Gentiles and the prophets write it down in predictive prophecy because God foret knows and foret sees sees in advance.

God predicts that apostasy shall worsen in the last days of the age and the prophets and the biblical writers put it down in the last days perilous times shall come and so and it's all done on the basis of divine foreknowledge because he is on new sea and having all knowledge God also has knowledge of that which has not yet taken place in historical terms in the same way of course God knows in advance just who will believe the gospel and be saved and who will not believe the gospel and who will not be saved foreknowledge in its basic essence means knowing in advance and this is a part of God's divine attribute of omniscience course now this is as far as the dictionary definition of the term will take us but it isn't far enough this definition this understanding of

[ 13 : 04 ] God's foreknowledge is perfectly scriptural as far as it goes but it doesn't go far enough you can leave it there if you like and there are people who leave it there but you can only leave it there by excluding other parts of scriptural teaching now we have to compare scripture with scripture and not lift out one thing and leave the rest we have to take the whole scripture tells us not only that God is omniscient and therefore has foreknowledge but it also tells us that God is eternal God is infinite which means that to God there is no such thing as past or present or future eternity by definition is an ever present now

God has this attribute of eternity whereby the totality of history from the beginning to the end of the world as it were is before his mind in terms of present existence history to us is a succession of events we go back and we talk about prehistory prehistoric and then we move on through the different ages and periods of history and it's a whole succession of one thing after another and only those who are alive in a given generation are actually witnesses of a given set of events in historical terms that's because we are finite that's because we are limited that's because to us there is a past a present and a future we are creatures of time that God has the attribute of eternity the entire course of history to him is accomplished fact full complete perfect therefore if God foreknows an event that event to him is already accomplished it is as firm in his mind as that which we would say is in the past in other words

God's foreknowledge is simply his knowledge his knowledge is different from ours if he possesses all knowledge at a given moment then he possesses knowledge of the past the present and the future all knowledge and therefore if God foreknows a man's conversion that conversion in God's mind is already an accomplished fact God knows it as an accomplished fact so far as the man is concerned of course his conversion is not an accomplished fact until certain things happen in his experience so far as the man is concerned his conversion must await the fullness of time as the hour rolls on apace and the hour strikes for him he doesn't know when that is he can't say but to God it's a fact it is known to him from the beginning of the world now an illustration of this may help understand the point in revelation 13 and verse 8 our

Lord is described as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world the lamb slain from the foundation of the world now so far as man is concerned so far as history is concerned the lamb was not slain until a certain hour on a certain day round about the year AD 30 yet in God's knowledge in God's foreknowledge the lamb was slain from the foundation of the world God's foreknowledge part of his omniscience part of God's eternal comprehension of the totality of all things so you see when Peter says here that God's children are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father what he is saying is that although they become gods in experimental terms in their call by grace and their new birth in God's understanding they are his from the very beginning this is what

Paul means when he says in Ephesians 1 and verse 3 verse 4 he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world you see the very same term and expression as is used of our Lord Jesus Christ the lamb slain from the foundation of the world his people are chosen before the foundation of the world so you see God's foreknowledge is something more is something stronger than simple prescience simple knowing beforehand it is a knowledge that determines action it is a knowledge that involves the event but that leads me then to the second way and a far more important way in some respects of understanding this term foreknowledge and that is the question how does scripture use this term how do the biblical writers use this term well this term foreknowledge occurs five times in the

[ 20:10 ] New Testament and I'm going to turn call your attention to those five places so that we have all the evidence before us the first is in Acts chapter 2 verse 22 where we read ye men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain now what is this well here it is Peter the same apostle who writes our epistle preaching on the day of

Pentecost and he is correcting an erroneous idea about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ there was a tendency then as there has been a tendency since and there still is today in some quarters to think that the cross and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was a human tragedy attributable to the cruel deeds of certain human beings oh if only Pilate hadn't done that if only Caiaphas hadn't done something else if only the Romans hadn't done this and the Jews hadn't done that it never happened it was all a terrible mistake there was as there still is in some quarters that erroneous idea of the cross and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is that idea right well you see

Peter answers that question him Jesus of Nazareth being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain the teaching is that although men played their part God sent his son to the cross God planned God predetermined the death of his son it was God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge foreknowledge there you see clearly means foreordination not simply knowing in advance but designating in advance decreeing in advance so that the cross and the death of the

Lord Jesus Christ wasn't something that God just happened to know in advance would happen it was something that God determined in advance should happen now is that a correct interpretation well if you interpret scripture by scripture you'll find confirmation of my interpretation in Acts 4 verse 27 Herod Pontius Pilate the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together what for for to do whatsoever thy hand God's hand and thy counsel determined before to be done so you notice that when Peter uses the word foreknowledge here he uses it in the sense of foreordination it doesn't mean simply that God knew what would happen but that God ordained what would happen he did not merely know in advance that when he sent his son men would kill him but rather that God sent his son into the world that he should be killed he spared not his own son foreknowledge the word is used in the scripture you see in a sense which is stronger than simply knowing in advance it is not only for knowing it is for ordaining it is for arranging it is for designating or again a second occurrence of this word foreknowledge in the New Testament is in Romans chapter 11 verses 1 and 2 where Paul says

I say then hath God cast away his people God forbid for I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abram of the tribe of Benjamin God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew now here is Paul speaking about the future of God's people he's arguing that God has not cast away the people that are his the people that he chose if he has chosen them says Paul it is inconceivable that he would cast them away so that in this passage foreknowledge means choose foreknow means choice God hath not cast away his people which he chose then the third occurrence of the word foreknowledge is in our text the fourth is in the same chapter 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 18 onwards 1 Peter 1 18 for as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world what was manifest in these last times no no word foreordained comes from the same original as the word foreknowledge here it is translated foreordained

[ 27:17 ] Peter says that God not merely knew beforehand that Christ would be manifest but that God actually arranged and determined and designed in advance that his son should be manifest in the world so then you see these passages show us that the biblical writers use this term which in our text is translated foreknowledge as meaning foreordained forearranged!

foredesignated! Chosen! Predetermined! But there is a fifth passage in which this term occurs and I've left it deliberately until the last and that is in Romans chapter 8 and verse 28 to 30 where we read and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are the called according to his purpose 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 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 now what is this well

Paul is here encouraging the church in Rome he says that they can be sure that all things work together for good you see he's got the same basic object as Peter he's comforting distressed Christians Christians who are in trouble he says all things work together for good for who for those who love God who are they who love God those who are called according to his purpose God has a purpose to redeem his people and that purpose is accomplished in five stages foreknowledge predestination calling justification and glorification whom he did foreknow foreknow now I ask you to notice that God's foreknowledge comes before predestination the word predestine means to predetermine the end the object but foreknowledge comes before that both logically and scripturally foreknowledge precedes predestination those who are predestined are those who are foreknowledge now I ask you to simply to notice the fact that God does not say that Paul rather the apostle Paul does not say that

God foreknew something about particular people he doesn't say those who God foreknew would believe he doesn't say that that is what Arminians endeavour to make the apostle say but he doesn't say that he doesn't say that God foreknew anything about anybody he says that God foreknew certain people as individuals and he is using you see this term as we have found it used in these other passages which means that he knew the individuals as individuals he knew them he took knowledge of them in eternity before he called them before he justified them before he glorified them yes and before he predestinated them he took knowledge of them he foreknew them in order to predestine they were the objects of his love they were marked out for salvation

God's people are his by foreknowledge elect says Peter according to the foreknowledge of God the prior apprehension of God surely my friends it is perfectly clear that in the usage of scripture this term foreknowledge means foreloved loved beforehand foreowned owned before possessed before laid hold of before the omniscience of God the eternity of God lead to that conclusion and the way in which the scripture writers used the term confirm that complete but I'm not finished

[ 32 : 54 ] I'm going to now point out further that God's foreknowledge cannot possibly mean a simple knowing in advance without contraverting and overturning everything that scripture tells us about his omniscience scripture relates the omniscience of God the all knowledge of God to all men and all things is universal it has no exceptions God's omniscience makes no discrimination whatever between Christian and non-Christian Jew or Gentile bond or free God has an absolute and a universal knowledge of all men as well as all things everywhere but scripture teaches us and shows us that

God's foreknowledge relates only to a certain special category of people the term foreknowledge is never used in the New Testament of all men in the sense of God's general omniscience it is invariably related to his people to his church and Peter addressing his pilgrim stranger Christians here calls them elect according to the foreknowledge of God Paul tells the Christians in Rome whom God has called according to his purpose that God has foreknown them now this term foreknowledge is never used of men in general when the scripture says that God knows a man or foreknows a man it means a special relationship it means something quite different quite peculiar now let me demonstrate this

God's omniscience is universal God's foreknowledge relates only to his church to his people take for example what we read in the book of the prophecy of Amos chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you O children of Israel against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt saying you only have I known of all the families of the earth is that true surely God knows all races all nations surely God by his omniscience knows all there is to be known not only of the Hebrew family but of the Egyptians of the Babylonians of the Syrians of the Medes of the Persians there is nothing unknown to him and yet he says you only have I known clearly the term known is used in a special way it means that these are the people whom

God knows in a special way you only have I known you only have I set my heart upon among all the nations and all the people you only those upon whom I set my love and for all my knowledge of all the nations and all men I know none as I know you there is a general universal knowledge by which God knows all men and all things but there is a knowledge of choice there is a knowledge of apprehension there is a knowledge which introduces a special relationship and what God said to his ancient people here by the lips of the prophet Amos he says to all his people in all the ages you only have I known of all the families of the earth

God knows everything about the Russians and the Americans God knows everything about the needs and the persons but God knows his church in a way that he knows no other it is a knowledge of possession or this same principle can be illustrated from the lips of our Lord himself Matthew gospel chapter 7 verse 22 many will say to me in that day Lord Lord have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works then will I profess unto them I never knew you

[ 38 : 34 ] I never knew you there are many who say they know him but the question is does he know him does he know them there are many who say I am a Christian I know Christ ah yes but my friends there's another question does he know you does he know you not with that universal knowledge of omniscience by which he knows everything but does he know you with that special knowledge that knowledge of favor that knowledge all says our Lord here speaking in the sermon on the mount he knows the best and the worst of men the very devils in hell are all known to him but what he says here concerns the false professor the hypocrite the people who profess a lot to know nothing of divine grace to then he says to then he will say

I never knew you you have never been my people you were never in that special relationship of a true Christian to me clearly there is a technical a special usage of this word knowledge and foreknowledge you find exactly the same thing in the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins and we read Matthew 25 verse 12 concerning the foolish virgins he answered and said verily I say unto you I know you not same thing they had lamps they had a certain amount of all but they were never known with that special knowledge profession is one thing possession is another I never knew you is it not a solemn thing the knowledge the foreknowledge of

God but then I called attention to Deuteronomy chapter 7 and verse 7 the Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people for you were the fewest of all people but because the Lord loved you and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers now here surely is the plainest clearest statement of God's foreknowledge though it doesn't actually use that term he set his heart upon them he set his love upon them from the foundation of the world he knew that they were his and he knew that they were his because he chose them to be his what is it that Jeremiah says in that great statement of his in chapter 31 and verse 3

Jeremiah chapter 31 and verse 3 the Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee everlasting love he drew them because he loved them he loved them everlasting his knowledge of them is dated in eternity what is it Philip Doddridge says he drew me and I followed on charmed to confess!

the voice divine everlasting love you have the same thing indicated by Paul 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19 where he says nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal the Lord knoweth them that are his but then the Lord also knows them that are not his by his knowledge of omniscience by his universal knowledge he knows all men he knows those who are not him he knows those who hate him those who oppose him those who are against him he knows them all and yet set as it were within that universal total knowledge there is this additional fact the Lord knoweth them that are his knows in a special way knows in terms of a peculiar relationship well my friends I submit that both the dictionary and the way in which the terms are used show us that God's foreknowledge relates to his people and to his people alone his omniscience relates to all men and all the world foreknowledge is the same thing as foreknowledge foreknowledge is the same thing as choice foreknowledge in the way in which scripture uses it is a knowledge of possession foreknowledge is God setting his heart upon his own

[ 44 : 27 ] God's foreordaining certain persons for his own possession and it is only after his foreknowledge that he predestines only after his foreknowledge that he calls justifies new of us predestination is the outworking not the originating that this love to its desired end he sets his heart upon a people and as the years come and go he calls them according to his own eternal purpose and race now says Peter your pilgrims your strangers your lost cast and the off scourings of the world in the opinions of men but you are relaxed according to the foreknowledge of God the Father now my dear friends if there's comfort better than that I'd like to know it the very idea that there can be comfort consolation assurance reassurance for Christians stronger than that is inconceivable

I'm not asking you if you understand it I'm not asking you if you can think of reasons why such a thing like that should come to you if you are a Christian these things as far as I'm concerned are not things for controversy they are not for non-Christians they are not pearls to be cast before swine they are not for minds that can never rise above themselves they are for faith they are for Christian people what Peter intended them to be the comfort of the gospel well let me in conclusion then try and apply it with brevity and with simplicity what greater comfort to the distressed Christian can there be than in the hour of his trial to recall that he is the object of this special apprehension of God that God for new him that God set his heart upon guilty vile and wretched name they love me from the beginning with everlasting love why

I can never tell but all to know it's true and to feel the truth of it what a comfort what a weapon of offense against the devil and then I put it like this what greater comfort can a Christian have than the very clear assurance of his eternal salvation that flows from the realization that he is the object of God's foreknowledge lack of assurance is a great problem it is a great trouble and a great sorrow to a great many Christian people alas but the man whose experience of God in Jesus Christ rests not on his decision for Christ but on

God's decision for him a decision that God registered from the foundation of the world when God set his heart upon that man in foreknowledge I say that produces an assurance that is comfort incomparable you have that assurance these are the comforts of the gospel these are the things to set against the fact that you're a pilgrim that you're the earth scouring of the earth in the minds and the eyes of men or finally let me apply it like this think of the inevitable issue of this foreknowledge of God the inevitable issue of this foreknowledge this foreordination of God is that his people are his people forever and they can never be lost the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is a doctrine that scripture teaches in many ways but all my dear friends the easiest explanation of the final perseverance of the saints is the foreknowledge of God

God's people are his to the end simply because they are his from the beginning not only can they never be lost there never was any question in his mind as to whether they should ever be saved and if God arranges final perseverance it is only because he arranges all the steps and the stages that lead up to it and the root of final perseverance is in the foreknowledge of God whereby he apprehends he lays his hand and his heart upon a soul in eternity and the flower that springs from that root is the final perseverance of the saints do you want gospel comfort here it is there is no gospel comfort apart from the truth apart from the fact apart from the glorious doctrines of the gospel if you're a

[ 50 : 38 ] Christian my friend it isn't by chance neither is it by fate it isn't by accident it is that God having laid his hand upon you in eternity in the fullness of time of history so far as you are concerned God comes and he works out the steps and the stages of his purpose he arranges the means as well as the end he orders everything perfectly sharply what can you do but adore him what can you do but admire the perfection of his purpose what can you do but admire the power with which he works it all out in life and time and history neither angels nor men nor devils stand in his way what can you do I say but love him in return what can you do but worship him and adore him and praise him and glorify him and live to his praise and to his



Lord strangers elect elect according to the foreknowledge God the father blessed  
foreknowledge blessed father blessed are the people that know this joyful sound God give  
us such knowledge for that is knowledge that is second only to his do you know him that's  
blessed knowledge does he know you that is the height of all knowledge to know him is to  
live to know that he knows you is to live with joy unspeakable and full of glory yes even  
though you're a stranger and a pilgrim in a foreign land because you can look it in the face  
and you can say

I know where I've come from I know where I am going to my father my god began it all  
controls it all concludes it all and blessed be his glorious name forever and ever Amen