

The Foreknowledge of God

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Paul taught about the foreknowledge of God when he wrote: ***“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.” (Romans 8:29, emphasis added.) So we see from the text of the Scripture that there are some individuals whom God “foreknew”, and that He “predestined” these individuals to “become conformed to the image of His Son”, Jesus Christ. Or in other words, God foreordained that these particular individuals would be brought to faith in Christ, who is the “firstborn among many” who will be counted among His brethren.

Many dedicated Christians interpret the Bible as teaching that God’s salvation through faith in Christ is an offer that is open to each and every individual who has ever lived. With this belief and understanding of the Scriptures, the determining factor involved in each person’s salvation is their own decision as to whether or not they will receive Christ.

Other dedicated believers interpret the Bible as teaching that those who come to faith in Christ are those individuals whom God chose before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5), and that God brings these chosen individuals to faith in Christ apart from any decision of their own will (Romans 9:16). These come to faith at such time as they are called by God, after which they believe in Christ and find themselves with a heart to obey Him. Their belief in Christ is both a result and evidence of their regeneration.

In the first case, man’s own will and decision is the determining factor in his salvation. In the second case, man’s will and decision have nothing at all to do with

his salvation; rather God's choice is the determining factor. The question that we should ask ourselves as dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ, is which of these two teachings is the scripturally consistent, and therefore the correct teaching.

In the first case of those who believe the Bible teaches that man's own will and decision is the determining factor in his salvation, many will agree completely with John 6:44 and 6:65, where Jesus said that no man can come to Him unless the Father draws him, or enables him to come. And then, in order to make the free will doctrine of salvation logically consistent, they must insist that there is a time at least once in every individual's life when they are drawn by God and enabled to come to Christ. At that time, the individual must decide for themselves whether or not they will accept Christ.

However, there is a problem with this interpretation. The idea or the assertion that there is at least one "enabling" or "opportunity" granted by God to every individual to accept Christ is an idea that is stated nowhere in the Bible. The assertion that God gives every individual at least one opportunity to choose to believe in Christ is a teaching that is not found in the Scriptures, but it is a necessary assertion for man to make in order to "fill in the gaps" so to speak, in an effort to support the free will doctrine of salvation, at least logically.

Continuing with this line of interpretation, part of which comes from the Scriptures, and the rest which comes from man "filling in the gaps" with his own assertions and reasoning, some will then interpret God's foreknowledge mentioned in Romans 8:29 and elsewhere as God knowing from before the creation of the world those individuals who would choose to accept Christ when drawn and enabled by God to do so. They will also say that the individual could reject Christ at this time if they choose to do so.

To make matters even more complicated, in the light John 6:37, 6:44, 6:65, and Romans 8:30, some who adhere to the free will doctrine of salvation feel compelled to acknowledge that there is an effectual calling of God, and that none of those who receive this calling will refuse it. However, because they interpret God's foreknowledge as God knowing ahead of time those individuals who will make the decision to accept Christ and not reject Him when they are drawn or enabled to do so, they must then assert that God only extends His effectual calling to those whom He knew would accept Christ of their own free will anyway, without an effectual calling.

This idea of God only extending His effectual calling to those whom He knew would accept Christ of their own free will anyway is yet another idea and concept that is stated nowhere in the Bible. And this makes it yet one more attempt by man to “fill in the gaps” by adding his own assertions and reasoning to what is written in the Bible, in an effort to support the free will doctrine of salvation by attempting to explain passages of Scripture that clearly challenge this doctrine.

In the second case of those who believe the Bible teaches that man’s own will or decision has nothing at all to do with his salvation, God’s foreknowledge is understood as follows: ***God chose before the world was created to save certain individuals, and He “knew” these individuals from the beginning.*** In His time, each of these chosen individuals is born into the world, and again in His time, He calls each of them to faith in Christ. Everyone who receives this calling does indeed come to Christ, and no one who receives this calling rejects Him. This means that the calling of God, which Jesus mentioned in John 6:44, and which Paul mentioned in Romans 8:30, is an effectual calling; it always results in regeneration for those who receive it. This interpretation of God’s foreknowledge of those who are predestined to be brought to faith in Christ is supported entirely by the Scriptures themselves, and it requires no additional assertions or reasoning by man in order to make it consistent and cohesive.