

First Stage: Foreknown



Secure in God's Choice (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue out theme for this week, "Secure in God's Choice."

I have been explaining in the previous talks that God has a plan that started in eternity, works out in time, and continues on into eternity. That's like God Himself. God Himself is from eternity to eternity and everything that God does has the stamp of eternity upon it. This plan relates to us, in particular, especially to those of us who believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and have become members of God's family.

And I have pointed out that God indicates in scripture that there are seven successive stages in the outworking of His plan. I'll recapitulate them because it is important to have them before our minds.

First, and this is in eternity to start with, God foreknew, He chose, He predestined. That's in eternity. Then the plan moves out of eternity into time and impacts our individual lives: He called. When we respond to the call, He saved. Having saved, He justified. And having justified, He glorified.

Now I am going in the following talks starting today to work through those seven phases one by one and explain more fully what's involved in each. Together today we will look at the first stage: God foreknew. Paul states this in Romans 8:29, a verse we have already looked at:

> "For whom He [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." (NAS)

Notice, it begins with God's foreknowledge. The apostle Peter in his first epistle, chapter 1, verses 1-2, comes out with the same revelation but he applies it to our choice. He addresses his epistle as follows:

> "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..." (NAS)

Let's leave out the place names which are not important. Writing to believers in Jesus Christ, Peter says, "[they] are

chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father…" Put those two Scriptures that we've read together and we see that God's foreknowledge comes first. And out of His foreknowledge proceeds His choice and out of His choice, His predestination.

But today we are going to focus on God's knowledge. "Foreknowledge" simply means that He knows in advance. It is part of His total knowledge.

I would say that there is no attribute of God that is more awesome than God's knowledge. Even when we contemplate this we have to bow in reverence and worship. What does God know? Let me give you just a little summation of some of the things that God knows. First of all, very simply, He knows everything. Let's never get away from that fact. In 1 John 3:20 John says:

> "For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything."

Do you know what everything means? It means everything. There is absolutely nothing in the past, the present or the future, here on earth or in the remotest area of the universe; there is nothing that God does not know. He knows the biggest and He knows the smallest.

We have seen before that He has intimate personal knowledge of the stars: "He calls them by name." We'll just look at those words in Psalm 147:4 once more:

> "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." (NIV)

Although there are billions upon billions of them, He knows exactly each one. He knows the name of each one and He calls each one by name. They respond to God's call. That's a wonderful thought.

Not only does God know the stars, let's come a little lower down. He knows the sparrows, some of the commonest birds that there are. Almost all over the world you will find sparrows. I have traveled in many nations and I can't think of a single nation where I haven't found sparrows. And they are really esteemed very little, nobody thinks much about a sparrow. A dead sparrow is found somewhere in the gutter and nobody thinks much about it. But this is what Jesus says about God's opinion of sparrows. In Matthew 10:29 He says:

> "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." (NAS)

Notice the mathematics of this. Two sparrows are sold for one cent, but in Luke 12:6 Jesus says:

> "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God." (NAS)

So you can get two sparrows for one cent. By the same reckoning you should get four sparrows for two cents. But when you invest two cents, you get the extra fifth sparrow free, for nothing. And Jesus says even that fifth sparrow is remembered by God.

I heard somebody say once, and it really brought tears to my eyes, "God takes time to attend a sparrow's funeral." We pay no attention to them, we consider them very insignificant, but God knows each one and not one of them falls to the ground without the Father.

Then another thing that God knows that we certainly don't know: He knows the number of hairs on our heads. "But the very hairs of your head," Jesus said in Matthew 10:30, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (NAS). Not one of us can accurately count the number of hairs on our own heads, some have more and some have less. But even those of us who have less, we still can't count them all but God knows the number of hairs on the head of every human being in the world today.

God knows each of us totally. We go beyond just knowing our hairs. There's a beautiful passage in Psalm 139 which I am going to dwell on for a few moments. Psalm 139:1-7. And David begins this with a kind of, I would say almost, a gasp of astonishment.

> "O LORD, Thou has searched me and known me, Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all. Thou has enclosed me behind and before, And laid Thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?" (NAS)

Think of a little of what David says. God knows our thoughts at a distance. I heard once a man who had a revelation of

God say this: the angel that brought him the revelation told him, “Men’s thoughts sound as loud in heaven as their voices do on earth.” That was a shock to me. But that’s what David says here. “You know my thoughts afar off. You know my path and my lying down.” You know the way I walk, you know where I am to be found at any moment. “You are intimately acquainted with all my ways. There is not word on my tongue, O LORD, thou dost know it before I speak.” God knows what we’re going to speak before we say it. “Thou has enclosed me behind and before,”, you are all around me, “You laid your hand upon me.” Surely when we consider that we have to echo the words of David, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is too high, I cannot attain to it.” And then he says, “Where can I go from Thy Spirit?” That’s the key to how God knows everything in the whole universe, it’s through his Spirit. The Spirit of God permeates the entire universe. There is no place where the Spirit of God is not present. And through His Spirit God knows all these things that we know.

I would like to read a little further in that same psalm, Psalm 139:13-16:

> “For thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb.”

Before I was actually born into the world, David said, You were forming me in my mother’s womb.

> “I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made…”

I feel exactly the same. When I consider God’s knowledge, it’s wonderful, but it’s frightening. I feel a sense of awe.

> “Wonderful are thy works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee. When I was made in secret. And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.”

That’s an amazing thought. We read that God made man out of the dust but here we read that that dust was formed in the depths of the earth before God used it to make man. So that God didn’t just begin with the dust but He began with the chemical processes in the earth which ultimately produced that dust. And then he says:

> “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.” (NAS)

David says, “You’ve known every process that my body would pass through. You’ve known when each of my members was to be formed. You’ve known what day every event would take place in my life. There is nothing that you haven’t known, not merely now but in advance.” And if we put that together with the words of Paul and of Peter, we see that his knowledge is from eternity. God knows through His Spirit the past, the present, the future, the small, the great, the important, the insignificant, what we’re like inside, what we’re like outside, our physical nature, our emotional makeup, God knows it all.

Well, our time is up for today. I’ll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow we’ll go on to consider the second stage in God’s plan: He chose us.

Radio Program

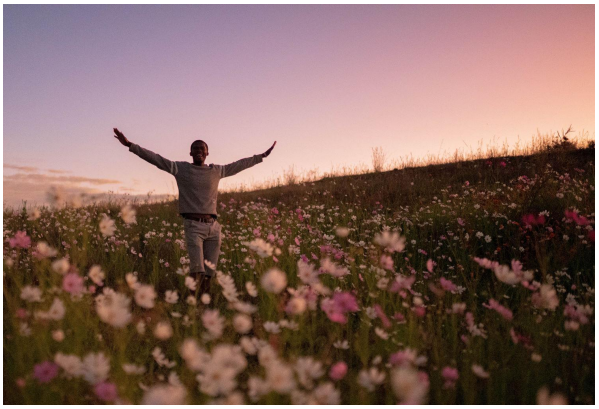
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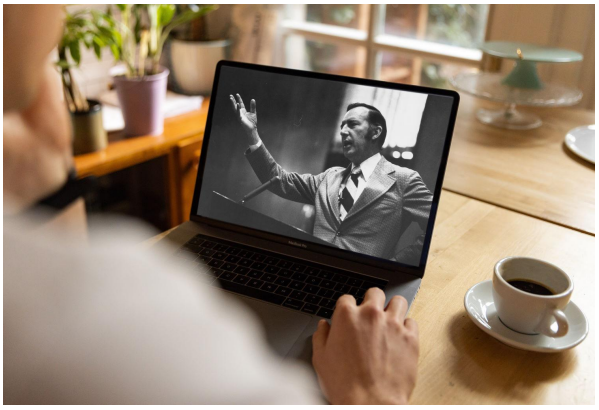
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