

The Gospel According To Paul: Romans

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Foreknowledge and Predestination (8:31-39)

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. ³¹What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Excursus on Foreknowledge and Predestination

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the

likeness of his Son . . ." (8:29). Much more has been read into these two terms theologically than is there lexically. As the result of the work of such theologians as Augustine and Calvin, the New Testament terms "foreknowledge," "predestination," and "election" have come down to us with a more theological interpretation than they ever possessed in the Greek New Testament. The meanings of these terms, as used in the common Greek language of the first century Mediterranean world, will greatly assist our understanding of them as used by Paul and as initially understood by the original readers of the New Testament. It has always been an amazement to me at how much meaning has been read into these words that is not there in the original language at all! These Greek words and their first century meanings are very simple and straightforward. So much so that it would take a lot of indoctrination to make one see what a lot of people have been led to see in these words as they have made their way down through the centuries in the pages of the first century texts.

Foreknowledge

The Greek terms lying behind the verb foreknow (*prognosko*) and the noun foreknowledge (*prognosis*) simply mean: to know beforehand, previous knowledge, something of which one already has knowledge, to know of an event before it comes to pass, or conceive of a concept before it becomes a reality (Bauer (A/G) *Greek-English Lexicon* 2nd ed., pp. 703-04; Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:715-16). This simple understanding of these terms greatly enhances the meaning of the New Testament texts in which they are used. These are as follows:

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge (prognosis - something previously conceived of); and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross (Acts 2:23)

Having knowledge of me from the first (proginosko -having previous knowledge of Paul), if they be willing to testify, that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee (Acts 26:5 ASV).

For those God foreknew (proginosko - conceived of beforehand [i.e., those created anew "in Christ"]) he also predestined [foreordained] (proorizo -decided/determined beforehand) to be conformed to the likeness [eikonos – image] of his Son, that he might be the firstborn

among many brothers. (Rom 8:29).

God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew (proginosko - had previously known [Israel]). Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah--how he appealed to God against Israel: (Rom 11:2).

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect [chosen; i.e., those "in Christ."], strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge (prognosis – known beforehand; i.e., those God had in mind in eternity – the new creation "in Christ") of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Knowing that you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, {even the blood} of Christ: who was foreknown (proginosko - known in eternity) indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake, (1 Peter 1:18-20).

He (Paul-mwl) writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this [knowing this beforehand] (proginosko - having prior knowledge or being forewarned), be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position (2 Peter 3:16-17).

Predestination

In each occurrence of this term (6 each) in the New Testament, what God has predestined is "a people who have experienced new creation." God has predestined that all those "in Christ" should be saved, etc. It is not "individual election" which is under consideration here. What has been

predestined is a "scheme of redemption" or a plan of salvation that is to take place by new creation.

The popular (and/or theological) understanding of this term is distorted from its etymological root. We only hear "destiny" (i.e., a fixed future), as in the Pagan belief in *tuche* (fortune, good luck, chance), which in Greek mythology was the power of *Moirai* (the goddess of fate). This goddess had the power to predetermine the course of a person's life and there was nothing that person could do to change it. Whether one had a good or bad life was a matter of chance or fate. But this word (*proorizo* – predestine [foreordain]) in Christian literature has nothing to do with fixing an individual's fate or destiny. The word *proorizo* simply means, "to have previously made a decision." This is what God did in eternity. He made a decision to deliver fallen mankind by creating anew (or re-creating) a new human race "in Christ" out of the old fallen creation "in Adam."

The term *proorizo* is a compound word; it is *pro* + *horizo*. *Pro* is a Greek preposition meaning "before" and *horizo* is a Greek verb meaning: "to decide, make or come to a decision, draw a conclusion, to determine or resolve; e.g., to decide beforehand to do something (Bauer (A/G) *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2nd ed., pp. 580-81; Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lexicon*, pp 1250-51; Kittel, *TDNT* 5:452-56). One can see this meaning of *horizo* in the following NT references:

The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed (horizo - decided), but woe to that man who betrays him." (Luke 22:22) Matthew and Mark both read here, "just as it has been written (kathos gegraptai)."

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose (horizo – decision) and foreknowledge (proginosko – something known beforehand); and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross (Acts 2:23).

The disciples, each according to his ability, decided (horizo – to make a decision) to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. (Acts 11:29)

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined (horizon - decided) the times set for them (prostetagenous – to place or set in position) and the exact

places where they should live. (Acts 17:26)

For he has set (horizo - decided on) a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31).

Proorizo (the Greek word translated "predestinate" and "foreordain") is simply the word *horizo* with the prepositional prefix *pro* (before). *Proorizo* means all that the word *horizo* means (as defined above) but with the idea of "before" (earlier, in the past) affixed to it. It means to have previously decided, to have drawn a conclusion, determined something, or having resolved something at a point in time in the past, or to have made up one's mind prior to the point at which it is being discussed; i.e., to have decreed, declared, or designated something in the past prior to the present moment. Following are all six occurrences of this term in the New Testament:

For those God foreknew (proginosko - previously conceived of - the new creation "in Christ") he also predestined (proorizo - earlier decided, determined beforehand) to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers [The concept of new creation was in the mind of God prior to the redemptive event of the death and resurrection of Christ] ³⁰And those he predestined (proorizo - decided on beforehand; i.e., those "in Christ"), he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Rom 8:29-30).

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ**. ⁴For he chose us **in him** (in Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ (proorizo – decided beforehand that those in Christ were to be adopted as sons), in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us **in the One he loves**. ⁷**In him we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Eph 1:3-7).*

. . . to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under

one head, even Christ. ¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined (proorizo - earlier decided that he would save the human race by creating it anew "in Christ") according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory (Eph 1:10-12).

Conclusion

What is the meaning of all this language of predestination, preordination, predetermination, foreordination, and foreknowledge? When reading the New Testament in Greek, one does not experience the same reaction when reading these words in Greek as one does when reading the English text. Words are sounds (when spoken) or symbols (when written) that stand for ideas or concepts. The ideas or concepts associated with the words we read are often filled with meanings which are not intrinsic to them but come from notions attached to them which are essentially foreign to them.

This is the case with these words. The notion of God having determined: (1) that he would select certain individuals to be appointed to eternal life, (2) that he would redeem them individually and designate them as “the chosen,” (3) that they had been predestined for eternal life from times eternal, and (4) that he would draw them to him and grant them the gift of faith by which they were to be saved, is not an idea intrinsic to any of these words. The idea of a “fated existence” is not biblical, in fact, such an idea is pagan to the core and violates everything the Scriptures teach concerning God’s relationship to man.

God is no respecter of persons; he does not discriminate one member of the human race from another, nor is he is not a prejudiced bigot who favors one kind of person over another. He has not “predetermined” the destiny of anyone, nor has he “foreordained” that certain individuals be given the gift of saving grace to draw them to Christ, while others are left to wander through this world in a predetermined course to Hell. Where man spends eternity is his choice! God wills that all men should be saved and come to knowledge of the truth. The Scriptures say, “whosoever will man come,” not “only the elect who are predestined unto salvation may come.”

These concepts are rooted in the teachings of such church

theologians as Augustine of Hippo (early 5th century) and his disciples, and was given a greater audience by John Calvin (16th century) and other theologians of the Reformed Church in the 16th century. Paul's use of such words as *prognosko* (to have prior knowledge) and *proorizo* (to decide beforehand) simply do not communicate the meanings or concepts poured into them by those theologians looking for a terminology to communicate their theology, a theology which was not intrinsically found in the terminology itself. The definition of a word is determined by its etymological meaning and by its use in a given context. The terms *prognosko* and *proorizo* do not contain the meanings assigned to them by the theology of Augustine and Calvin, neither etymologically nor contextually.

What God knew beforehand (*prognosko*) and determined beforehand (*proorizo*) was that he would redeem fallen man by means of a plan of salvation wherein he, himself, would enter the world as one of those he wished to redeem (adamic man), and through this visitation reverse the fall of man (Adam) through a wondrous act of redemption called "new recreation," which would be offered to all those who would believe that such a story as this was true and respond to it in life transforming faith. This story is called by the Apostle Paul "the power of God for salvation" to all those who believe it and accept the major player of the story as the Lord and Savior of their lives.

This one was Jesus of Nazareth, who was both "one of us" and "God with us." He was a re-visitiation of the first Adam, who, through his death and an end to man's condemned existence "in Adam," and through his resurrection brought a new existence into existence for all those who would become one with him in his new existence. This is what God knew (*prognosko*) and determined beforehand (*proorizo*), i.e., that the human race would be given another chance to become what it was created to be – beings created in the image of God.

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