Section: Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Q77. Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

God ordained creation and the plan of salvation for the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.

**Q78. Who will be saved?**

Only those whom God has chosen for salvation—the elect—will be saved.

**Q79. When did God choose individuals for salvation?**

Based on His will alone, in love, God chose and predestined each of the elect before creation.

* **Intro: “Part 8: Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)”**

Tonight, is our first lesson in the next section, or part, of our catechism. This section is Part 8, and is called *Doctrine of Salvation*.

This means we are focusing on questions like How can a person be saved / How does God save a person / Who does He save / Why does He save anyone?

In these things, there is a tendency *in the flesh* to submit to popular ideas, humanistic teaching, or other rationale of our own human mind *instead* of the authority of the almighty, eternal God’s holy word. As a result, we form or have views of *who God is* and *how He acts* (or doesn’t act) based more on our personal feelings or human logic instead of the revelation He gave us in Scripture.

But, as Christians, we need to acknowledge the full authority of the Bible—the full authority of what God has said about all things—and submit to God, conforming to His image—*not* trying to make Him conform to our ideas.

We’ve studied some of these salvation elements so far in the catechism, but there are more elements that need to be taught from Scripture about salvation.   
A right view of Soteriology shapes so much about how we view and worship God and testify of His life-changing gospel to others.

For some of you who are newer to our church and these historic biblical doctrines, I pray the coming weeks are fruitful for you, like they have been for those who’ve been with us longer.

Let’s *all* commit together to really look to sharpen our understanding of these things in the coming lessons. May God be gracious and do a good work in us as we come faithful and hungry to His word, being humble as we take the journey to further see what *Scripture says* about how God decreed salvation, about fallen man, and about who God is saving.

Let’s begin by getting familiar with our first of tonight’s three catechism questions, it says:

* **Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

**Q77. Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

God ordained creation and the plan of salvation for the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.

We’ve covered the focus of this first question in previous lessons, but before we get into how God saves, it is important to **remember** why God ordained creation and the plan of salvation.

The Bible says that ALL of creation exists to glorify God.

God is perfect, and He is first and foremost for His name and glory.

As we’ve learned, *if God were to put anything above Himself, He would not be ultimate; He would not be perfect*.

The created is not ultimate: the Creator is.

We need to remind ourselves that Scripture teaches the primary reason that God is, and acts, and saves is in accordance with His will and *ultimately* for His sake and His glory, and not ours.

**Romans 11:36 (ESV)**

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

We see an example of this in:

**Ezekiel 36:22 (ESV)**

“…Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name…”

Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation? …*For the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.*

Creation is God’s creation. God owns everything and as Owner-Creator, He may do what He wills with creation. Everything that exists, including our lives, exists ultimately for the glory of God. “From him and through him and to him are all things.”

It is vital that we acknowledge that God is first and ultimately for God.

His eternal glory is the highest purpose in *all* that He does.

This includes the fact that He is glorified in His work to save and sanctify those whom He has chosen to redeem *and in His wrath for those whom He has chosen to be condemned*. …We’ll see this more as we continue on in the catechism.

* **Presuppositions**

In regard to our doctrine tonight, we’re going to start with a verse to affirm or provide the correct *presupposition* needed for our topic.

To presuppose something is to assume beforehand, or have an understanding or opinion based on the idea that something is true because of previous assumptions or teachings.

When it comes to our topic tonight, everyone has presuppositions. Everyone has an opinion or understanding based on a lot, some, very little, or zero careful Bible study or teaching on *this* topic.

So, the passage we will look at here will either affirm what your presupposition is *or correct it*.

Romans 9:16 teaches us that:

Being chosen by God for salvation and being saved by God “depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” (**Romans 9:16**)

This passage teaches us clearly, directly that the one true, gracious God is the one, (of Himself and by His will, not our will or effort,) *who determines who is saved.*

Some of you know this, maybe you’ve known it for many years, or maybe you’re learning it more recently; either way, you affirm this verse. You say, “Yes, that is how I come to this topic or doctrine tonight.”

Perhaps some of you have a presupposition that rails against this verse. You are saying, “No. That can’t be. What about *this* or *that*?”

For all of us, we must have Scripture be our authority and source of truth.

If any of us are *not* willing to do this then we are wasting our time. Everything we know and believe has to be based on God’s truth, as taught in the Bible.

After letting Scripture be the authority on this doctrine, we should all be able to affirm that being saved/being chosen by God for salvation “depends ***not on human will*** or exertion, ***but on God***, who has mercy.”

We looked at the larger context of this passage last time I taught this lesson, and more recently, this year, in the Covenant Theology series. So, we’re not going to walk through Romans 9 again *in detail*, but it is very relevant and helpful for the consideration of God’s sovereign, absolute election, so *I encourage you* to look up those prior lessons if you need a reminder or missed them.

* **Woven into Other Core Truths**

Our time spent studying Covenant Theology will help us understand tonight’s truths.

Because we studied Baptist Covenant Theology, we know about the Covenant of Redemption. We know that in the Covenant of Redemption, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit planned and decreed to graciously redeem the chosen ones (the elect) from sin and punishment based on the work required of Jesus. All of creation is set in the context of this divine plan.

So, the specific doctrine we study tonight should not be seen as something that stands *alone*. We must keep the other foundational truths of Scripture in mind as we study these things.

I believe that’s why *some* people struggle with understanding, accepting, and loving the doctrine we’ll look at in this section; they hear it or consider it as standalone concepts, rather than critical components of salvation and Scripture as a whole.

Because they don’t understand the key things we have studied thus far in MidWeek, they may be inclined to think it’s a *take it or leave it* thing rather than biblical truth *that is woven into other core truths* and therefore can’t be rejected.

The doctrines within this section of our catechism don’t stand alone, they explain realities within the bigger context.

With that, look with me at next two catechism questions; I’ll read them both and then unpack them both as we proceed through our lesson:

* **Unconditional Individual Election & Predestination Defined**

**Q78. Who will be saved?**

Only those whom God has chosen for salvation—the elect—will be saved.

**Q79. When did God choose individuals for salvation?**

Based on His will alone, in love, God chose and predestined each of the elect before creation.

These answers speak to the doctrines of *Election* and *Predestination*.

These are technically two distinct sides of the same coin. You’ll often hear or read one of these terms to summarize both realities. This is okay because they go hand in hand; one exists because of the other.

To be specific in our study, let’s see our definitions of these two terms to see the part of this one topic that they highlight. (These definitions are on the pages of these catechism questions and also in the glossary in the back of the book.) Our first term is:

**Unconditional Individual Election:** Before creation existed, God chose which individual human beings would receive salvation from sin, death, and God’s eternal wrath. This choice to redeem certain ones is not based on any so-called goodness, will, or work in them; rather, it is based on the freedom and grace of God in Christ Jesus alone.

Our second term is:

**Predestination**: In love, based on the perfect will of the Triune God, the destiny of salvation unto eternal life for God’s chosen people was planned and ordained from start to end before creation began. Predestination is not based on foreseen deeds or faith in anyone; it is based on God’s will alone.

Perhaps you see how these are two distinct sides of the same coin.

Before creation, God chose *who* specifically He would save from all of humanity, and this choice was *unto salvation*; the choice was made in such a way that *destined* these individuals for sure salvation: eternal life in blessed communion with God.

Unconditional Individual Election highlights *the choosing of specific persons* based on *God’s will alone*.

And Predestination highlights that the *destiny of salvation unto eternal life* was planned and ordained for this elected—this chosen people—*before time began*.

Now, before we move on, see that There are two important descriptors in our Election term, which are: “Unconditional” & “Individual”. Consider them briefly with me…

* Unconditional is in our term because there are no conditions and were no conditions **in a person** that influenced or caused this choice of God. “This choice to redeem certain ones is not based on any so-called goodness, will, or work in them; rather, it is based on the freedom and grace of God in Christ Jesus alone.”
* Individual is in our term because God sovereignly choses *specific individuals*, loving them *in a personal way*. The elect are **not** a particular group (such as a national or ethnic group) and they are not haphazardly or indifferently chosen. Rather, the elect consist of actual persons from all tribes, tongues, and nations, who were known by God, and in time, sought, *and brought into the unified body of Christ* because of God’s eternal love for each of them individually and them being individually chosen by God before time began.

With some of that clarity for these terms, let’s further see now the glorious truths in the biblical text.

* **Seeing the Truths in Scripture**

Let’s see these election/predestination truths in what should be a very familiar passage, it’s a beautiful passage:

**Ephesians 1:3-11**

**3**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ (Pause for a moment, let’s be sure to note WHO is being spoken of here. The pronoun is “us.” Paul is writing to the elect *about the elect*. Ok, moving on… God has blessed **us** in Christ) with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, (Ok here we go, ready to see election and when this election was made?) **4**even as he [God] **chose** us [the elect] in him **before the foundation of the world** (Who did the choosing? God, HE CHOSE US. And when did He make this choice? **Before the foundation of the world:** in eternity past, before the fall, before creation!

Next it says…), that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ok here we go again, Paul intends to be unmistakably clear…) In love **5**he [God] **predestined** us (There is one of our key terms for this lesson: predestined. You know what predestined means by now. It means destinies determined beforehand: before creation, before the fall, before we were born and had done anything good or bad*, God predestined us*—the chosen ones.

And for what were we predestined?) for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Pause, this affirms what we have been saying, and what we saw in Romans 9. God determined who would be saved—*His choice*, it was His plan by His will, His decree…all of this is according to the purpose of His will.

Next it says…), **6**to the praise of his glorious grace (this salvation is “to *the praise of his glorious grace*.” As one of our catechism answers says, God works as He does *for the display of His glory*.

The passage goes on to explain many layers of the blessing of the redemption/salvation the elect are predestined unto.), with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **7**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, **8**which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **9**making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose (Again, it’s by His plan, by His decree), which he set forth in Christ **10**as a plan (Again, it’s by His plan, His decree) for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

**11**In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined (There’s one of our key terms again: predestined!) according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Again, it’s by His plan, His decree.)

Come on, if that doesn’t teach you plainly and clearly when, who, and why God chose to save, we’ve got some serious issues. It’s laid out clear as day.

Let’s see another passage. Look at:

**2 Timothy 1:8-9 (NASB)**

**8**Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, **9**who has saved **us** (Pause for a moment. Once again, the pronoun “us” refers to the saved elect. So, God has saved US…) and *called* us with a holy calling, not according to *our* works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus *from all eternity* (KJV: before the world began, NIV: before the beginning of time, ESV: before the ages began)

There it is again: The choice/election/predestination of specific individuals to be brought into the unified body of Christ was made before time. And this was decreed in the Covenant of Redemption that we have studied. The Covenant of Redemption is the plan and decree made before creation between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit to graciously redeem *the chosen ones* from sin and punishment based on the work required of Jesus. …We studied that.

Make sure this *before creation* point is clear to you. Remember, it is the emphasis of the term *predestination*:

“In love, based on the perfect will of the Triune God, the destiny of salvation unto eternal life for God’s chosen people was planned and ordained from start to end before creation began…”

When speaking of things to come, God inspired John to write this next verse in the Book of Revelation:

**Revelation 13:8**

…all who dwell on earth will worship it [the satanic beast], everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

This verse is saying that there is a heavenly book, and the book is called “the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” In this book are names of those God chose to save in Christ: the elect. And very important to our discussion tonight we see *when* those names were written in the book: “before the foundation of the world.”

Therefore, this passage also helps us see that God elected the individuals and predestined them *before creation*.

**If you are of the chosen ones, your name was unchangeably written in Christ’s book of salvation before the foundation of the world!** That is an awesome and comforting truth!

* **God Had Paul Address Objection**

But, in the flesh, some may not see this as awesome. There may be an objection to it or a dislike even. As we are all well aware of, mankind has a misguided claims to a sense of autonomy and a humanistic sense of fairness.

In light of that, God had Paul address a common objection to the truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation, consider Romans 9:19-24. Paul says,

**Romans 9:19 (ESV)**

You will say to me then, “Why does he [God] still find fault? For who can resist his [God’s] will?”

Pause here. Paul’s readers heard the teaching, they understand what is being taught: God chose who He would give saving grace to, *by His will alone*–that is, election and predestination.

Paul knows they might ask, “So with that being the case, how is it right for God to hold those accountable whom he didn’t choose to save?”

And to this question, Paul could go into a variety of reasons why it is **just** for God to do this.

He could rightfully teach about Federal Headship.

He could rightfully teach about the reality of moral accountably for those under the sovereign God.

He could rightfully teach about several other biblical truths…good truths, truths that are worth knowing to help us understand more deeply and live more humbly.

But that’s not what God ordained for Paul to write. The teaching that God inspired Paul to write is the humbling truth that *we are finite created beings,* ***not capable of or worthy of questioning the Creator****.*

God has Paul give the kind of response we really don’t like, even in other situations.

Even when it’s true, we humans usually don’t like it when an employer tells a worker, “Because I have the authority to say so or do so.”

Or a husband to say to a wife, “Because I have the authority to say so or do so.”

Or a mother to say to her child, “Because I have the authority to say so or do so.”

Or a police officer to say to a criminal, “Because I have the authority to say so or do so.”

Our flesh, young or old, doesn’t like that kind of response.

It’s sin in us; we’re too prideful, too self-seeking. Even when we know that it’s factually correct, we don’t like the “because I have the authority to say so or do so” kind of answer.

But it is the right answer in many cases.

And, so it is with God. Better said, so much more with God! God’s position and ways should not be questioned. He gets to say what is right and wrong. And these distinctions are **not** shifting. They are grounded in who He is. *What is just is just because God is just, and therefore He defines justice.* What is righteous is such because God is righteous, and therefore He defines righteousness.

Let’s see God’s handling of this through Paul. The question or assertion in verse 19 was essentially, “How is it right for God to hold man accountable if God has decreed everything?”

Here next, answer given:

**Romans 9:10-21 (ESV)**

**20**But who are you, O man, to answer back to God?

Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”

**21**Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?

There it is: the humbling truth that we are finite created beings, not capable of or worthy of questioning the Creator. *Who are you, O man—finite man, created man, sinful man—who are you to question God?*

Of the many true answers God could have had Paul give, this is it: He is Creator, we are created. He has full rights over us. How God determined to decree for each of us is not to be questioned. God’s answer (through Paul) is “Because I, as the creator and owner you, have the authority to say so and do so.”

* **Christian Humility**

That is humbling. To be corrected this way should be very humbling. I hope you can accept God’s word on this. *Humble willingness to conform our minds and hearts around God’s truths is critically important.* It is Christianity.

Look at these passages:

**Proverbs 29:23 (NASB)**

A man’s pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.

**James 4:6-7 (ESV)**

**6**… “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” **7** Submit yourselves therefore to God…

**James 4:10 (ESV)**

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

I pray this is where you are in these things and in all study of God’s word.

God’s answer to pushback questions of Him or objecting to His ways of working *is for us to be humbled—to remember who we are in relation to Him*. He is Creator, we are created. He has full rights over us. He has decreed and He acts wisely and righteously.

I pray you remember that as you continue on the lifelong journey in your fallen flesh, seeking to know and honor God *in truth*.

* **Seeing the Truths in More Scripture – Romans 8**

Let’s look now at another great passage from Romans 8. Starting at verse 28:

**Romans 8:28-30 (ESV)**

**28**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Pause for a moment. Note that again Paul affirms the saved, those who love God, *are* ***called*** according to **God’s** purpose—that is His plan/decree. His intention is for the believer who has been saved by God’s sovereign grace to have comfort and security because GOD sovereignly elected and subsequently saved you! *It wasn’t dependent upon you(!)*, which is the foundation for why you are safe and secure forever with Him!

Verse…) **29**For those whom he [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30**And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

This is a beautiful passage. God is doing an unbreakable, unchangeable work in each of the elect. For our purposes tonight, see that it’s

God who did the foreknowing of those specific individuals,

God who did the predestining of those chosen ones,

God who does the effectual calling of the chosen ones,

God who does the justifying of the chosen ones,

and God who does the glorifying of the chosen ones.

*All of this is dependent upon God*, not man or any other thing else, outside of God.

* + **Rightly Understanding “Foreknew”**

Let’s focus for a bit on a certain term we see here in this passage, that is, “foreknew.”

This term has been greatly misunderstood and, by some, even twisted to support an **un**biblical idea that I’ll discuss in a moment. But first let us understand what this term *actually* means.

In Scripture, the words "know/knew" and "foreknow/foreknew" *sometimes* mean "choose" or "set favor upon" or "intimately loved."

And such is the case in this passage.

Based on how the words "know/knew" and "foreknow/foreknew" are sometimes used in Scripture and based on who God is, how He makes decrees, and how He works, we know that the word foreknew here means: *chose (elected) in love*. God has had eternal love for specific individuals, and this is an *electing love* that equaled them being *predestined unto salvation*. We see this here and we saw this in Ephesians 1, remember? “[God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world…*In love*[God] predestined us for adoption as sons,…redemption,…forgiveness of our trespasses…”

“He foreknew” in Romans 8 means “He lovingly chose” … “He lovingly elected.” God has had eternal, sovereign love for specific individuals and this was an electing love that equaled them being predestined unto salvation. This election was decreed before creation and was **not** based on any foreseen faith or so-called good deeds in any humans, rather it is based on God’s will alone.

For further study later, if you wish, since we don’t have time in this lesson, I have included in your notes a list of some texts to show this type of word usage in Scripture. In the passages listed you can see how know/knowing/knew/foreknew is used as a version of chose or elected: Romans 11:1–2; Amos 3:1–2; Genesis 18:17–19; Hosea 13:4–5; Matthew 7:23; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 2 Timothy 2:16–19

Now, let’s address the unbiblical idea some have about this word “foreknew” in Romans 8.

The misunderstanding of the word asserts that *God looked into the future to observe* the actions of humans, saw *and learned* who would choose Him, and *in response to that* He affirmed who would be saved and decreed such things to happen.

This unbiblical idea means the choice wasn’t first or truly God’s to make; the choice to elect persons was *dependent* upon God learning about the future actions of humans and basing His decree and actions upon that information.

Now, you may immediately see the **numerous** biblical problems with that *or* you may be thinking that may have some merit.

Let us consider why that idea is completely impossible and **categorically unbiblical**. (What I’ll say to this is only some of the many ways we can see this how unbiblical this idea is.)

As an aside, know that historically, faithful theologians of old, have denounced this false view. For example, the 1689 Confession of Faith says “[God’s] decree of anything is not based on foreseeing it in the future.”

Biblically we know that, before creation existed—before any humans were alive, before any angels existed, before there was anything made that was made—*God was*. We’ve studied this in our catechism journey. God is eternal. God is timeless, having always existed. And in this eternal existence before anything was created, God has been the same all-powerful, all-wise, all-sovereign God that He has always been.

Now, relevant to the point we are addressing is the fact that God is eternally omniscient. The definition of God’s **omniscience** is, “God has perfect, complete knowledge. He never learns, nor does He forget. He knows all things that exist and all things that could have existed. God cannot grow in knowledge, understanding, or wisdom.”

That is because in Himself, God has always had pure and complete knowledge. This is very important. The unbiblical idea of God looking into the future before creation to see who would chose Him requires God to learn something. This is categorically impossible.

Very much related to this is our definition of God’s **wisdom**; it says: “God possesses wisdom perfectly and has decidedly ordained all things perfectly, including the best ways to accomplish His decisions.”

You can see how this relates. His wisdom and knowledge go hand in hand; He knows all, and He has ordained all that comes to pass. God knows all because He has ordained all that comes to pass. Once again, we see the idea of Him choosing people because they chose Him is unbiblical. As we’ll learn about in the coming weeks, a person can only have saving faith in Jesus because God first chose him/her (before time began) and then, in time, God causes him/her to have this faith. Biblically, this order cannot be altered.

Very much related to this is our definition of God’s **sovereignty**: “All things are under God’s rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction. Providentially, He is a God who works, not just some things, but all things after the counsel of His own holy will. God's purpose is all-inclusive and is never thwarted. It is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things but that He does so always and without exception. God is the Supreme Being who answers to no one and who has the absolute right to do with His creation as He desires.” God is eternally sovereign.

Look at:

**Isaiah 46:9-10** (ESV)

**9**… for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **10**declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’

God declares “the end from the beginning.” In these kinds of passages, we see that: According to His own purpose and pleasure, God has preordained all that has and will come about. All that God has decreed before time began will happen, and only such things will happen. The historic 1689 Confession of Faith we hold to states this point like this: “God has decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass.”

Therefore, the reality of someone believing is because God decreed it *apart from any foreseen faith or so-called good deeds in any humans*. He has ordained all that comes to past in Himself—by His will—not subject to of affected by anything outside of Him.

And, additionally relevant to the point we are addressing is the fact that God is eternally immutable. The definition God’s **immutability** is, “God, in His being, perfections, purposes, ordinations, and promises, does not change in any way. He has always been and will always be exactly the same.”

This is relevant also because we see that God’s eternal choice in eternity past didn’t come about by learning or seeing something outside of Him; rather, He made His eternal choice based on His omniscience, wisdom, sovereignty, etc., and this choice is unchanging. It cannot change because God cannot change. The number of the elect does not/cannot increase or decrease. Those, and only those, whom God chose before time began will be saved.

God has ordained/decreed all that comes to pass. This is His creation; we live in God’s world. He owns all things, and He has determined, before creation began, all that will come about.

We learned these things from Scripture in our catechism journey so far; none of this should be new information for us who have been here.

In addition to these reasons, there are many more reasons why that take on “foreknowledge” (the idea that God learns things in order to make decrees) is unbiblical, such as the fact that we don’t have the kind of so-called “free will” that people wrongly assume. We have a real will, but because of the fall, it is certainly not free; rather, Scripture teaches natural man (unregenerate man) is enslaved to sin and cannot chose God without God causing it.

Also, that understanding of foreknowledge (the idea that God learns things in order to make decrees) is unbiblical because we are not autonomous beings; our very existence and actions depend on God. We can’t exist nor do anything apart from dependence on Him. He is the first cause, to all that comes about.

Additionally, that understanding of foreknowledge is unbiblical because of other doctrines we have learned, such as God’s intentional and particular design for the cross (who Jesus’ atonement was for).

And because of other doctrines we are about to focus on again in the coming weeks, such as how a person is enabled to have saving faith, and so on.

*Look,* the point is, without destroying the Bible’s teaching on **who** God **is**, **how** God **makes decrees**, and **how** God **works**, it is impossible to claim that God looked into the future before creation to see who would choose Him in order to make His choice of the elect.

Simply said, people claiming this either don’t know enough of the Bible’s teaching, or they are aware of the teachings and sinfully decide to reject them for something they like more or think makes more sense in their minds.

We cannot do that. As God’s people, we let Him tell us how these things are. **Isaiah 55:8-9** (ESV) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD…my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We cannot reject who God is, how He makes decrees, and how He works in order to accept an idea that seems more palatable to us or others.

So then, to say plainly what ‘foreknew’ in Romans 8 means, as we have seen in all of our Scripture tonight: In love, God chose who would be saved. This election is not based on any foreseen faith or so-called good deeds, rather on His will alone, decreed before creation.

Let’s close out our lesson with some important application.

* **Application**
  + **God Revealed These Truths for Our Good**

In all of this clarification, let’s be sure not to miss the other beautiful points of Romans 8.

As is often done in Scripture, the doctrine of election/predestination is being used as a comfort to the believer! Christian, because God unchangeably *chose you,* you are safe and secure with Him forever! Nothing can change that!

Based on and immediately following the teaching about God’s sovereign choosing and saving, Paul writes some familiar truths:

**Romans 8:31-39 (ESV)**

**31**What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32**He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? **33**Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. **34**Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. **35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

**36**As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
    we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

**37**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39**nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Surely you are familiar with these verses! But do you see that they are based on God’s sovereignty, as we’ve learned about tonight!?

Nothing can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Why? Because your salvation—your new standing with God—didn’t depend on you; rather, **God chose you**, God **caused** you to be saved, and **He keeps** you forever.

“We are more than conquerors.” Why? Because your salvation—your new standing with God—didn’t depend on you; rather, God has an eternal, electing, redeeming love for you, God caused you to be saved, and He keeps you forever.

Please see tonight that your salvation depends fully on God’s sovereign choosing of you. You’ll see why even more so as we go through this section of the catechism in the coming weeks, but it begins by God electing and predestining each one of us based on His will alone.

* **“How Do I Know If I Am Elect?”**

Some see the reality of election from Scripture and wonder…how does anyone know if they are one of *the elect*? Or personally they ask of themselves “*How do I* know if I am one of God’s elect?”

To this we must see that the answer is actually fairly simple, that is: **you know who the elect are because they have saving faith in Jesus**! True saving faith only exists in those God has chosen, and subsequently gifted saving faith to.

So, do *you* have saving faith in Jesus? If so, then you should take comfort in your God as one of His elect. This is not a haphazard presuming of Him, but an active trusting in Christ, knowing your salvation is all of Him, and living a life consistent with repentance, therefore, confident in His promises.

But those who do not claim to trust in Christ or do not have a credible profession of faith should not presume to be of God’s elect. Rather, they should know that as long as they do not have saving faith in God there is no comfort. They, by God’s effective power and will, must repent and believe in Christ alone, and if they do so, *only then* would they know that God has chosen them before time began.

It’s quite simple, we don’t presume of God, but once God works saving faith in a person, we confidently believe what His word says about him/her/you being *of His beloved, chosen people*.

All those who truly trust in Jesus alone show that God has eternally loved them, chose them before time began, and that Jesus died to save them! How amazing!

Next in our application, let’s consider:

* **How Does This Lesson Spur On Evangelism?**

This should be clear to us, but let’s mention it still. If God has planned an unchanging decree to save a chosen people, then we get to go out into this world and speak the good news of Jesus without any lack of hope. We know that God will save His people. We know that God has called us into this process to be speaking this gospel. So, we go with confidence—not in ourselves, but in our God. God has the plan and power to change hearts. He will do what He has decreed. Let’s go with confidence and tell others about the God who saves people from sin by the person and work of Jesus Christ, let’s call them to repent and trust in Jesus.

Knowing about election and predestination should put loving boldness in our heart. Our God saves!

And our final application point comes from a great passage of Scripture.

* **Identity of a Chosen One**

As we read this next passage, notice the identity that is set forth and then the implications of that identity.

Look at:

**Colossians 3:12-13**

*Put on then*, **as God's chosen ones**, holy and beloved,

Ok, pause: there is the identity. Chosen ones! Holy (meaning set apart)! And beloved—loved by God! As we’ve seen, Him foreknowing us means He lovingly chose us to be His forever!

Paul says “since you are God’s chosen loved ones *put on what I am about to say*!”

Let’s keep reading, **put on**:

compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Those are great commands. That is a beautiful picture of a true Christian.

* compassionate heart
* kind
* humble
* meek
* patient
* forbearance with Christians
* forgiving

Those are qualities of redeemed children of God.

But remember, on what basis does God through Paul command these things? On the basis of the gospel good news that you are chosen, set apart, and loved in Christ! On the basis of election and predestination! You know you were undeserving and incapable, therefore, it is fitting that you would be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, patient, forbearing with Christians, forgiving.

Because God chose you for salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ, **be this way**. Let your personal election into Christ be the reason and motivation for you to be like Christ!

I hope you see that! It’s so important. The doctrine we studied tonight is not about mere head knowledge or anything superficial. No, it’s about knowing who God is, how He decreed all things, and how He works *unto* us glorifying Him through it. God revealed these things to us in His Bible so that we understand rightly unto worshipping and serving Him correctly!

Please get this. Please. If these truths cause anything else (frustration, pride, unbelief), then you’ve missed God’s point in all of this. Don’t be there. Ask for help if that’s where you find yourself.

* **Standing with The Faithful Before Us**

To close our time, I want to read with you a portion of the historic confession, for you to see these marvelous things spoken of by theologians before us and for you to be encouraged in walking in step with this core Christian teaching:

1689 Confession of Faith: By God’s decree, and for the demonstration of his glory, some human beings and angels are predestined (or foreordained) to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace. Others are left to live in their sin, leading to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

These predestined and foreordained angels and people are individually and unchangeably designated, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased.

Those people who are predestined to life were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, according to his eternal and unchangeable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. He chose them in Christ for eternal glory, purely as a result of his free grace and love, without anything else about them serving as a condition or cause moving him to do so.

Just as God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has by the eternal and completely free purpose of his will foreordained all the means. Therefore, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ and effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working at the appropriate time. They are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith to salvation. No one but the elect are redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved.

The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care so that those heeding the will of God revealed in his Word and obeying him may be assured of their eternal election by the certainty of their effectual calling. In this way this doctrine will give reasons for praise, reverence, and admiration of God, as well as humility, diligence and rich comfort to all who sincerely obey the gospel.

Remember our first catechism Q/A tonight:

**Q77. Why did God ordain creation and the plan of salvation?**

God ordained creation and the plan of salvation for the display of His glory, highlighting especially His grace and power.

All things, including election/predestination and reprobation, are for His glory.

**Romans 11:36 (ESV)**

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Let’s pray.