

# *Our Great and Glorious*

# GOD

● *By James E. Gibbons*

**THE BIBLE DECLARES** the reality of God; the world of nature and human experience verify it. God is just as real as life and just as close as death. The most profound thought that can enter the mind of man is that of God, and the highest ambition to which man can aspire is to know God and to serve Him. The writer of Hebrews stated: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

What a great truth—GOD IS! It has correctly been said, "GOD IS A SPIRIT, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Although everything points to these facts and the reality of God, there is so much about God that we don't and cannot know. With Job we are made to ask, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7). And with Moses we humbly admit, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

It is important that we remember and not forget God, for God remembers those who remember him and he forgets those who forget him. He puts those first who put him first, and he leaves out those who leave Him out. It is that simple. Psalms 9:17 reads, "The wicked shall be turned into hell [sheol], and all the nations that FORGET God." Then from the other angle: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12). "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that REMEMBER his commandments to do them" (Psalms 103:17-18).

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Romans 1:28-31 further demonstrates what happens when man forgets God, leaving God out of his thinking. The writer Paul is talking about the ancient Gentile world. “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient [proper, seemly]; Being filled with...” And he proceeds to tell us of all kinds of sin and wickedness. The human mind is not a vacuum. If God is left out of our thoughts, ungodliness will come in and flood our minds and lives. It is that simple.

In this article we wish to occupy our minds on thoughts of our great and glorious God. There is great reward in serving God. He made us, and He knows what is best for us. Let us seek to know him and his will. Let us honor him for who he is.



## **I. GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN ANCIENT TIMES**

Modernists speak of the “idea” of God in the Bible. They say it had its roots in polytheism, mixed with idolatry, but was purified and modified by touching others cultures. We are told the idea of God evolved from a very crude form to a pure monotheism in the time of the prophets toward the end of the Old Testament Scriptures. But this is not true. The Bible rather is a progressive revelation of God of himself in his dealings with mankind.

Genesis 1:1 not only is the first verse in the Bible, it is one of the great verses in the Bible. It reads, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Moses wrote this, looking back to the time of creation from the time

he wrote (and we will look at God's personal revelation of himself to Moses a little later and his experience with Him).

The Bible nowhere tries to prove the existence of God—it simply states it. Ancient people never doubted the existence of God—it was self-evident. Those who are unbelievers in the Bible are not pictured as such because of intellectual reasons, but because of sin. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good” (Psalms 14:1). Hebrews 3:12 speaks of “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

**Elohim** is the Hebrew word for God in Genesis 1:1. This is the general designation of God, stressing his divinity, his grandeur, his power and might as the Creator and sustainer of the universe (equivalent to *theos*, the New Testament word for God). This word for God, *El*, reoccurs time and time again in Bible names like Isra-*el*, Samu-*el*, *El*-jah, Beth-*el*, etc. Actually, the word **Elohim** in this reference (Genesis 1:1) is plural, and “created” is singular in the Hebrew. This is very revealing, as well as being very interesting. In the Hebrew extension, magnitude and dignity are expressed in the plural; also, this hints at and prefigures the future revelation of God in his three personalities. This whole thought is carried over into verse 26 when God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness...”

Genesis 2:7 is another great verse in reference to God. It reads, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Here, coupled with **Elohim** (God), we have the word “LORD.” Isaiah later in the Old Testament represents God as saying, “I am the LORD, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images” (Isaiah 42:8). And it was by this name that God identified himself to Moses (Exodus 6:2-3).

The exact pronunciation of the Hebrews word translated “LORD” has been lost. It was the unspeakable personal name of God. After the Jews returned from Babylonian Captivity, having learned their lesson well in reference to idolatry, they so respected God that the time came when they refused to utter his name lest they take it in vain. When they came to this word for the name of God (which is frequent in the Old Testament), they wouldn't say it. Instead they said another word, *Adonai*. Since there were no vowel makings on the original written Hebrew words (just consonant stems), and since they refused to utter the verbal vowel sounds, over the years the ancient pronunciation has been lost. By taking the vowel sounds (which were put in written form later) from *Adonai*, the replacement word, and putting them with the consonant stems of the original name of God, scholars and translators have come up with such names as Jehovah, Yahweh, and other variations of these spellings. Cloverdale was the first one to use LORD in English to represent the name of God and that always spelled with capital letters. Therefore, every time you see LORD in the Scriptures that represents the personal name of God which we really don't know how to say.

This is regrettable because it is how God revealed himself to man in a personal way. This personal name of God would present him in his personal covenant relationship to man; it would present him in his benevolence and goodness. How fitting it is used in connection with the creation of man.

Yes, God is a personal God. Adam and Eve talked and were in very close communion with their Creator. Enoch “walked” with God. Noah found “grace” in the sight of the “LORD.” Then years later God (the “LORD”) called Abraham out of the midst of another apostate and idolatrous generation to personally deal with him, promising him that of his posterity he would make a great nation and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:6). Certainly he was personal to these old patriarchs.

God’s revelation of himself to Moses was really some experience for Moses. Moses was in exile in the wilderness, and in a most unusual way God appeared in the burning bush. He identified himself to Moses as the God of his father (Exodus 3:1-6). As he was commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, he wanted some reassurance from God. He wanted to know how to handle the people when talking to them about God. With this request in mind, God further identified himself by saying, “I AM THAT I AM... Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). “I AM THAT I AM”—This is understood to mean the Eternal Self-Existent One. How great and appropriate!

Moses was destined for some great and glorious experiences with God. In the exodus from Egypt while encamped at Mount Sinai, Moses personally received the Ten Commandments from God engraved on tables of stone (Exodus 19 and 20). In fact, he received all of the laws of the Old Testament. While dealing so personally with God, and talking with him, Moses wanted to see this Almighty Eternal Being. Of course God is Spirit, and that created a problem, but God hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and he was allowed to see his glory as it passed by. The presence of God was seen in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as it led them toward the Promised Land. The personal presence and glory of God filled the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and rested upon the mercy seat between the cherubim of the ark of the covenant. Later when Moses died, God buried him (Deuteronomy 34:5,6,10). He had a relationship with God like no man had ever experienced.

God made many and varied revelations of himself to his creatures in ancient times. But we are made to limit ourselves to these few considerations because of the intent and scope of this present article. However, it would seem inappropriate to continue without calling your attention to Isaiah 57:15 and Psalms 23 in passing.

Listen to this majestic Scripture: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth etern ity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one” (Isaiah 57:15).

“The high and lofty One that inhabiteth, whose name is Holy”—what majestic thought! What a beautiful way to put it! Not only does he inhabit eternity, he dwells with the one who has a “contrite and humble spirit” in the realm of time.

The shepherd boy David found the reality of this earlier in the 23rd psalm. He said, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want...” “The LORD” (the personal, unspeakable name of God) was personally looked upon by David as his shepherd. The “high and lofty One” who inhabits eternity was with the lowly shepherd boy in every circumstance of life...good times, bad times...even leading him through the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, he said, “I will fear no evil.”

Thus God made revelations of himself to man, even to his apostate children, from the most ancient of times. Although the human race was a fallen race, and the Savior had not yet come, many of God’s creatures were able to enter into a meaningful relationship with their Creator. They found that God was great and glorious.

## II. GOD HAS SPOKEN IN HIS SON



It baffles our imagination to think of such a Supreme Being (who is Almighty), who brought everything into being. Our efforts to tell about him are about like an ant trying to describe a man; no, like a bacterium trying to describe an elephant. No, really, there is nothing to which we can make a



comparison. Here we are, a little speck down here on the earth. Our earth is a smaller planet going around the sun. Our sun is the center of the immediate universe, yet our sun is said to be a smaller star going around the outward fringe of the Milky Way—and the expanse goes beyond that (on and on). And God made all of it! How can we explain God? But he is! He is real. Everything points to this great truth.

Just by simple observation and cold calculation one must conclude the reality of Supreme Intelligence and the existence of Almighty Power; we cannot deny it (Romans 1:20). The evidence of Supreme Intelligence and Power is everywhere. Someone has said, “If the word GOD were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud, engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence that God is in the world would be no stronger than it is. When the human intellect thinks in the terms of finality with the world as its premise, the THEREFORE of every syllogism will be God. The universe is a big advertising poster spelling GOD.”

Helen Keller was a blind lady who has died in recent years. She not only was blind, but deaf. In spite of this, she learned to communicate, read Braille, and even to talk. At that point when her dark and silent world was penetrated, someone presented her with the thought of God. Her immediate response was that she already knew it...she knew it all of the time! Isn't this something?!

It is obvious that God is. Yes, everything points to this great truth. But this is not enough. We would like to know more. What is he like? What is the nature of God? Can we actually know him? Simply to be aware that there is such a SUPREME BEING is not enough. This does not satisfy. Does INFINITY have personality? Does this old universe have a HEART? Beyond this world (which too many times is heartless, cold and indifferent) is there a Supreme Being of TRUTH and COMPASSION that we can look to? What is the nature of God anyway?

We have a clue as to the nature of the Being of God when we consider the nature of the being of man. We are made in the “image of God” and in his “likeness” (Genesis 1:26). As we look at our physical likeness in the mirror, we are made to ask if it is this. Then we remember that Jesus said, “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24). Something that Jesus said after his resurrection, stressing the fact that he indeed had been raised from the dead, will help us understand this. He said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). Therefore, we conclude that the “image of God” does not refer to this physical body, but to the mind and spirit. Our spirit lives in this physical body (and departs from it when we die—Ecclesiastes 12:7; James 2:26). (The fact that God is Spirit was the basis of the condemnation of idolatry—Exodus 20).

This gives us a little deeper insight into the nature of the Being of God, but really nothing tangible. It still leaves us with much that we would like to know; yes, in fact, we would like to know God. Our original parents knew God and were in personal communion with their Creator. And all of us are so constituted that we are like fish out of water until we are right with God (It

has been said that man is an incurably religious creature). What David wrote long ago expresses our feelings. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalms 42:1-2). “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psalms 63:1). And, like Moses, we desire to see God.

Yes, God is INVISIBLE SPIRIT (1 Timothy 1:17), existing in another dimension from our immediate human experience, but with the appearance of Jesus Christ on the pages of history our desires have been honored. He has filled the gap. He has given us something concrete and tangible to rest our minds upon when we think of God. Hebrews 1:1-3 reads, “God, who at sundry [various] times and divers [different] manners [ways] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Amazing truth! Isaiah 7:14 in its application foreshadowed the birth of Jesus. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” And what does “Immanuel” mean? God with us! Then listen to Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” With the approach of this incredible event, the angel told Mary, “The Holy Ghost [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The apostle John gives us an even more breathtaking view of what God has done. Listen: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:1,14,18). What profound truths!

When we see the Lord Jesus Christ, we see God. Paul spoke of Jesus as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15). “For it pleased the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell” (Colossians 1:19). “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). In other words, the fullness of Deity was embodied in Jesus. The essence of God is seen in him. Jesus had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). And in him we see all the perfect character and attributes of the eternal God. One time Jesus was talking to his disciples about God the Father, and Philip asked him to show them the Father. The Lord replied, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,

Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father..." (John 14:9). Peter made the great confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). However, Thomas was the first one to directly call him God. He had missed out on seeing Jesus the day of his resurrection, and he expressed doubt. He must see the nail prints, actually put his fingers into the prints, and thrust his hand into the side of Jesus before he would believe. But a week later when Jesus came into their midst and personally invited Thomas to do this, he didn't esteem it necessary. With unrestrained emotion, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:24-28).

Jesus is the Jehovah (the "LORD") of the Old Testament. He said to the Jews of his day, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:56-59). They got the message. Hardened and unbelieving, they took up stones to cast at him. They well knew the expression "I AM" had reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:14). Jesus claimed to be God. And, as Deity, Jesus forgave sins and accepted worship, which no man is allowed to do.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 the apostle Peter quotes a psalm which the Jews regarded as Messianic. He said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool." His conclusion and application follow. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:34-36; Psalms 110:1). Jesus baffled and silenced the Pharisees with this Scripture (Psalms 110:1) in Matthew 22:41-46. They had tried to trip Jesus with their "loaded" questions so Jesus had one of his own for them. "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" They replied that he would be the son of David. Jesus quotes Psalms 110:1, then said, "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" They couldn't get hold of that. Why would David call him Lord? They shut up. But Jesus was God and man at the same time. The Jehovah of the Old Testament took the form of man and walked upon this earth...and to become our Savior! Consider Malachi 3:1.

We are truly thankful that God has spoken to us in his Son. And with Paul we say, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Praise be to God!

### **III. THE PRESENT REALITY OF GOD**

#### **God is Alive and Real**

God is still alive today. He is real. He is not just SOMEONE we have read about from the pages of a very ancient book. He is not just the GREAT SOMEONE off in the great somewhere. Psalms 90:2 reads, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the



world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” The heavens still “declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalms 19:1). Men are still made in the image and likeness of God; God still animates our bodies with life...in HIM we live, and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Evidence of his reality and goodness are manifest daily to all. As Jesus said, “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Paul and Barnabas amplified this truth by saying that God “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:16-17). This is still true today. God is alive.

Jesus is still LORD. Hebrews 13:8 declares, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever.” He still is “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). Men still need a Savior. We still find men lost and the Great Commission was to be carried out “unto the end of the world [age]” (Matthew 28:20). The fact that Christ has not returned from heaven compliments this truth. We read in 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Yes, God is still in the business of saving souls and changing lives. Christ still lives, thus Hebrews 7:25 declares, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” And men still find that the Lord is gracious and precious (1 Peter 2:3). Amen.

### **The Indwelling of God**

God is real to the real Christian. When we become Christians, we are born again; we become children of God. Jesus told Nicodemus that a man had to be “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). According to Acts 2:38, when we repent and are baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins, this takes place. Then we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit into our lives. Acts 5:32 also tells us that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. This happens when we obey God initially as we become Christians, and we increasingly receive him into our lives as we continue to obey him thereafter. The reality of this great truth is expanded in a wonderful way in Galatians 4:6, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The word “Abba” actually means the same thing as “Father,” but it is Aramaic and the other represents the Greek word for father. Aramaic was the everyday language spoken by the Jews in Palestine. Therefore, “Abba” is more of a personal word for father. It is very much like our word “Daddy.” In it we can hear the babbling of a baby or a small child. We are indeed children of God now. We have experienced the new birth, and because we are children of God (the Holy Spirit is within us),

we cry out as babes in Christ, “Abba, Father.” God is very personal and real to us. And as we grow and stay surrendered to God, the Holy Spirit produces all the beautiful Christ-like traits of character in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23).

The New Testament continually talks about the Holy Spirit dwelling in Christians. He dwells in us. The word translated “dwell” means to dwell as in a house. Sometimes the word has a prefix which signifies *down* and at other times, *in*. Paul wanted the Ephesians “to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” then he continued, “That Christ may DWELL in your hearts by faith...” (Ephesians 3:16-17). The word “dwell” here means to settle down in a house. The Holy Spirit dwells in us according to our faith. Again listen to Paul: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which DWELLETH in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). This means to be in a house. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God DWELL in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). Here it means to use or have a house. The Holy Spirit has taken his abode in a Christian as a house. So this makes the words of Jesus even more significant when he said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

And what a great truth this is! The God of heaven has so honored us that he has taken his abode in us. We make a mistake when we try to explain, to dissect, every aspect of this great subject. We are dealing with the Supreme Being of Eternity, and how can we expect to know everything about so great a thing? (Who can even explain how his own spirit dwells in him, let alone the Holy Spirit?) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a matter of human feeling or emotion, but a matter of faith (and power). We do not necessarily feel the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but because we have the Holy Spirit we feel (are alive spiritually). In one sense we do not feel physical life in our bodies, but because we have life in our bodies we feel (we are alive; we are able to feel). In a sense this is true with the Holy Spirit.

### **Romans 8:26-39**

Romans 8:26-39 is a great section of Scripture. It fits in with our over-all theme, and the immediate consideration of the present reality of God, in a wonderful way. If you have a tendency to worry and let the cares of this world dominate your life, you need to examine this Scripture a little more carefully. When you study this great Scripture and began to fathom its depths, you will find that most of your worries and anxieties will simply vanish away. You will conclude that there is no way (and we repeat, no way) that a Christian can lose.

**Verse 26:** ‘Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered’ (also, read the next verse). What a tremendous truth! There are so many times we feel

inadequate when we pray. We just don't know what we should pray for or how we should say it. Rest assured God knows. The Holy Spirit takes our sincere feelings, our needs, and carries the right message through Christ to the throne of grace. Isn't it wonderful that He would do a thing like that?

**Verse 28:** "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." Underline this Scripture in your Bible, underline it in your mind, and engraft it in your soul. He didn't say that everything would work together for our pampered pleasure, or self-indulgence, but for our good. The providence of God is involved here. Such is a reality in the lives of real Christians. Believe it, do your part, and trust God for the rest.

God is a personal God, and he is personally involved in the lives of all true Christians. We are taught to say that we will do such and such a thing "if the Lord will" (James 4:13-15). Paul, over and over again, speaks of doing something "if the Lord will" (Acts 18:21; 1 Corinthians 4:19). God has a purpose and plan for our lives, and we need to pray that we will fit into it. Prayer is to be made according to the God's will (1 John 5:14). Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but thine, be done." And having prayed this, he was ready to face anything. Good, and that which may not seem so good to us, can be used of God for our good and his glory. James says to "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations [various trials]; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2-3) Peter speaks of the trying of our faith as gold tried by fire (1 Peter 1:7). It takes a lot of ore to be smelted and processed to make a few ounces of gold. Most of us are like the ore; we have a lot of rough edges, which needs to be knocked off. Our natures need to be refined. Corn in the garden, or the field, will put down roots in a dry season and the wind will have a hard time blowing it down. But if the season is too "good," having a lot of rain, the roots are on the surface of the soil. The least wind will blow it over. So it is with us. If everything went "our" way all of the time, we would be spoiled brats. Remember, God is behind the scenes. Our disappointment may be his appointment. And the worst thing that ever happened to us may be the best thing that ever happened to us if we don't let it get the best of us. Character is being developed (if we keep the right attitude). God may be (and is) preparing us for bigger and better things.

**Verses 29 and 30:** "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn 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 about that? This is really some Scripture. Here we have the doctrine of predestination. Predestination and the free will of man are both taught in the Bible. Notice we didn't say Calvinistic predestination, but simply predestination.

To properly understand the Biblical doctrine of predestination, we need to be aware of the sequence of things here. God first foreknew, then he predestinated. Later he called, he justified, and he glorified. Calvinism seems to have it the other way around. They would have us believe that God first decreed and predestinated, irrespective of the free will of man. In other words, when God decided from eternity to make man, he also decided then and there who would personally go to heaven and who would go to hell. Destinies were individually and irrevocably set. But according to our Scripture in Romans, God first foreknew, and then He did the predestinating.

The question is, what did God foreknow? Of course, God foreknew everything. Acts 15:18 reads, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." God is Supreme Intelligence. Being omniscient, there is nothing that he does not know. He can look down through time and eternity and see everything that will ever happen, and know everything that is, or that will be. To say the least, that is mindboggling to us. We can't understand it, but we can believe it, and accept it. As human beings we have a hard time remembering what has happened in the past, let alone seeing into the future. It has been established that the devil has certain limited powers along this line, and through the influence of demons men have been able to foretell certain things that will happen. But God is All Knowing: He knows the end from the beginning. He knows every detail. There is no way we can begin to comprehend this (so we need not try). Just believe it, and accept it.

The foreknowledge of knowing who the saved were from eternity would of necessity have to be preceded by other foreknowledge. God would have to foreknow that man would sin. Having foreknown this, he would have to foreknow and formulate his plan for Jesus to be the Savior from sin. Then he would be in a position to foreknow who the saved would be, and consequently to predestinate. Biblical predestination is to be understood in the light of foreknowledge, with the foreknowledge always preceding it.

God's plan from eternity called for Christ to be the Savior of sinful humanity. Peter, later writing in the realm of time, said that Christians had been redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:19-20). John the Baptist introduced Christ, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The extent of God's purpose and plan is seen in John 3:16. "For God so loved THE WORLD, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Paul in 1 Timothy 2:4 declares the mind and will of God on this matter. "Who WILL have ALL MEN to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." This continued thought is brought out in 2 Peter 3:9. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise [of the second coming and end of the world], as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-

ward, NOT WILLING that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance.” The “WHOSOEVER WILL” aspect of it is again emphasized in Revelation 22:17. So, God’s will is that WHOSOEVER WILL can and may be saved through Jesus Christ. God has made man a responsible, free moral agent. God’s is merciful, but his grace must be accepted.

Keep all of this in mind as we get back to our former question: What did God foreknow? To be more specific, what he foreknew in Romans 8:29 involved “whom he foreknew.” Those predestinated by God were first known by God. In other words, God looked down through eternity and saw them. What did he see? He saw (foreknew) who would have good and honest hearts and of their own free will and volition accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Then he said, in essence, “They are the ones. They are my elect.” Not because He decreed it before He looked from eternity, but afterward. What He saw determined the decree. Omniscience does not mean arbitrarily imposing the Divine Will, over-riding man’s free will, but simply knowing in advance and recognizing those who would accept him, as his own. From God’s viewpoint, they were chosen “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3-5). In Christ, “whosoever will” may be saved, and God foreknew who they were. And, as Paul said, they were later “called.” How were they called? By some mysterious working, God letting them know they were already his people? Thus, saved from eternity? Not at all. They were not already saved, and no such teaching is found in the Scriptures. Paul told the Thessalonians, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 1:16). The gospel was commissioned to be preached to “all nations,” “all the world,” that “whosoever will” could come and be saved. Man’s freedom of choice must be exercised. Then he continues to exercise it after becoming a Christian. Peter admonished, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE: for if ye do these things, you shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:10).

Therefore, beloved, if God knows all of these things about us from eternity that puts our human situation (especially as Christians) in an entirely different light, doesn’t it? And what a different perspective it is! We are not just down here “batting the breeze.” God knows all. He knows all about us. Rest assured He does. He knows if we really love him and want to do his will. Everything has purpose and plan behind it. God knows everything. Jesus said that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). A sparrow doesn’t fall to the ground without God knowing about it. God is omniscient. God is Almighty. God is wonderful in all things!

**Verse 31:** “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” If the Almighty God of eternity is for us, who can be against us? God and one righteous person makes a majority. The rest of the world may be on the other side, but God and one person make a majority.



With him for us, really who “can” be against us? Who could ultimately prevail against us? The answer is NO ONE.

**Verse 33:** “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” Don’t worry about what people may say about you if you are a real Christian. It matters very little. God will have the last say. He is the ruler and judge of the universe. Let us be concerned about what He thinks about us.

**Verses 35-39:** “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Amen and amen!

As we said, there is no way that a Christian can lose. We have already been told that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (verse 28). Now Paul tells us that through Christ we are “more than conquerors.” Assuredly, 2 Corinthians 1:20 reads, “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” Listen again, this time to 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, “Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all things are yours; And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” The Corinthians were glorying in men (the preachers). Paul says this is ridiculous. The preachers were merely their “ministers” (KJV)—or more expressly, servants or slaves. People just don’t glory in slaves. Paul enlarges the thought to show that everything is servant to the Christians. Even death itself. We should never consider ourselves to be the victim of circumstances, but surrender ourselves to God, and use the situation for the glory of God. Even death itself is servant to the Christian. It will serve to remove us from the veil of wrath and tears and usher us into the very presence of the great God of eternity. So, even in losing we win. There is no way that we can lose. Whether we live or whether we die, we are the winner.

Beloved, with an attitude like this we can face anything. We know that regardless how “bad” things get, they are going to get better. God works all things together for our good. He is the author of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). We should never grumble. We should be the most optimistic people in the wor’ld. Praise His Name!

### **God Can Be Trusted**

God can be trusted. His character is the law of the universe. Paul speaks of our “hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the

world began” (Titus 1:2). Then in Hebrews 6:18 and 19, we read, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast...” We have hope as a Christian, and the basis of our hope is that God does not lie. God says what He means, and He means what He says. Truth is not determined by popular vote, or by what we think about it, or what anyone else thinks about it—but by what God says about it. It is not determined by how many are following it, or whether anyone is following it. Truth is still the truth because it is God’s character and is the law of the universe. What is right is always right. Right is right if nobody is right, and wrong is wrong if everybody is wrong.

We need men today who will trust God and take him at his word...*regardless*. Even if it means you will be standing alone, and many times you will be. We need to have the same spirit the prophets of old had. Sometimes they had to stand against the tide of corrupt humanity, and it seemed like they alone were standing there. One brother prophet over there thought he was standing alone, but God let him know that He had 7,000 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal yet (Romans 11:3-5; 1 Kings 19). And, no doubt, there are more people today who love God and want to do right than we realize. But, regardless, we must take our stand for God.

Oh, God means what He says, and says what He means! We can believe it. We can trust it. We can go to the Day of Judgment trusting it. He has said it in his Word. That settles it. We need not worry. If we believe his Word, and obey it, we know that we are right with him.

Men may not believe in God, nor trust his Word, but his Word is still the truth. We find these words in 2 Timothy 2:13, “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” God cannot lie. We may not believe what He says, but it is still the truth. He cannot deny himself. His character is the law of the universe. And, even as Paul said in Romans 3:4, “Let God be true, but every man a liar...”

We can take God at his Word. Let us never become discouraged, or give up, or say that we need something different. Let us never think that we need to give in a little here or give in a little there. Never think in terms of modifying God’s message to accommodate unregenerate man. When we come to the Day of Judgment, what is in the Bible will still be in the Bible. God does not lie. We can take him at his Word.

Let us never give up, but press on. The book of Hebrews was written to people converted from the Jewish religion to Christianity. Some of them were getting discouraged and ready to give up. The writer shows how that everything in Christianity is superior to the Old Testament—what a great religion we have! They were encouraged to press on. “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed

toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that everyone of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:10-12). "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Yes, we have a GREAT and GLORIOUS GOD. Believe in him and believe him. Let us surrender our all to him. Let us love him, and with our whole being committed to him, serve him. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). □



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