

QUESTION: Because God is all-knowing, and because He gave us free will, how can we reconcile that He knows our future without usurping or voiding our free will? Also, why would God let us live out our lives if He already knows the end from the start?

ANSWER: There is nothing to reconcile - foreknowledge does not negate free will. **God's ability to KNOW "the end from the beginning"** is called **His foreknowledge**. He knows beforehand what is going to happen, but that is not the same as forcing someone to do His will. You have free will (also called "volition") to go your own way and make a thousand mistakes or wrong turns, and God knows each mistake and wrong turn before you make it. He will not prevent you from making the mistakes or wrong choices, but He may arrange circumstances to soften your landing (or in some cases, make it harder), in order to show you His love and grace, or to bring you to repentance, thus influencing you to make a decision for Him next time. There is a very fine line between God arranging our circumstances, influencing our decisions, and knowing the outcome, and Him "predestining" us to make certain choices. God has predestined that **we be conformed to the image of His Son**, or in other words, to become more like Jesus Christ. He will work ALL things together in our lives **towards that purpose**, if we allow Him to. We allow Him to work all things together for good in our lives by surrendering our will (which is an act of our free will) to His, and by having faith that He is working it all out for our good and for His purpose.

- **Romans 8:28-29** "And we know that ALL things WORK together for GOOD to those who LOVE GOD, to those who are the called according to His PURPOSE. For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to be conformed to the IMAGE of His Son.....**"

God has a plan for our lives, if we belong to Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10), but **He knows whether we will take the easy road or the hard road** to our destination. We need to get the bigger picture of free will. God did not give us free will just so that we could waste our time trying to figure out things like, "Does God want me to eat this cheeseburger, or not?" God gives us commandments, and general principles of life and good health in His word, and He expects us to use the brains He gave us in making wise decisions. Ultimately, the sum total of our decisions will make a difference and have bearing on **how soon, or with how much or how little difficulty**, we reach our destination. God even knows when we will FAIL! Remember Peter when he denied knowing Jesus, and how Jesus had foretold (He had foreknowledge) that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed? Jesus did not ask the Father to prevent Peter from denying Him, but He said He was praying for Peter, and that it would all work out in the end.

- **Luke 22:31-32** "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and **when you have returned to Me**, strengthen your brethren.'"

God does have a plan for our lives, and He will complete it. **By our free will, we determine** whether it will be completed quickly and easily, or with great difficulty and over a long period of time. God "begins a good work" in you the moment you accept Christ as your Savior and are born again. He will "complete it" or bring it to fulfillment until the day you go home to be with Jesus. Look at Paul in Acts 9:5-6. After Paul gets knocked off his horse and temporarily blinded, he finally asks, **"Lord, what do You want me to do?"** We make it hard on ourselves when we go against God's plan for us, but He will let us go our own way until we get tired enough and finally surrender all to Him. This is what it means by "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Goads were sharp, pointed sticks used to keep the oxen moving when pulling a cart or plow. The driver would poke or "goad" the oxen with the sharp stick if they

slowed down or went in the wrong direction. Paul had been going in the wrong direction, totally away from God's plan for him, when Jesus made that statement, "**It is HARD for you** to kick against the goads."

- **Philippians 1:6** "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."
- **Jeremiah 1:5** "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you and I ordained you to be a prophet unto the nations."
- **Acts 9:5-6** "And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. **It is hard for you to kick against the goads.**' So he (Paul), trembling and astonished, said, '**Lord, what do You want me to do?**'"
- **II Timothy 1:9** "Who 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 given to us in Christ Jesus BEFORE time began."

Our calling and God's purpose for us as the CHURCH, the Body of Christ, was prepared beforehand according to His purpose and grace, but **there is much leeway for each individual** within the church. For instance, if you fail to witness to someone whom God has put in your life, His plan and purpose for that other person will not be stopped by your disobedience. He will get the message to them some other way, but you will miss out on any rewards. This also means that if you rebel and mess up to the point of God taking you home to heaven prematurely (I John 5:16-17), God will call someone else to fill the gap. Jesus said the gates of hell will not prevail or be victorious over His church (Matthew 16:18), but you as an individual can either get with the program or not, because you have free will.

The second half of the question is: "why would God let us live out our lives if He already knows the end from the start?" Part of the reason is because **God is glorified in our weaknesses, as His plan is carried out in spite of us and our natural strengths**. As we gain an understanding of the "bigger picture", then we like Paul can glory in our infirmities and weaknesses, because we know that God's strength is made perfect in us, and He will get all the glory and praise.

- **II Corinthians 12:7-9** "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a MESSENGER of SATAN to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"
- **I Corinthians 1:26-29** "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the FOOLISH things of the world **to put to SHAME the wise**, and God has chosen the WEAK things of the world **to put to SHAME the things which are mighty**; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

Another part of the answer to that is "**because of the ANGELIC CONFLICT.**" The "angelic conflict" means the continuing battle of Satan and his angels rebelling against God, and how God wants to show Himself absolutely fair and just in His judgment against those angels who sinned. Paul tells us that the "mystery" of God is to reveal His "manifold wisdom", through His dealing with us (the church), "to the PRINCIPALITIES and POWERS in the heavenly places" (that means Satan and his demons, the fallen angels - Ephesians 3:10-11). Ephesians 2:7 says "that in the ages to come, **He might SHOW the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us** in Christ Jesus." Again, this means God is demonstrating to Satan, the fallen angels, and I believe also to the rest of the angels, just how absolutely fair, just, good, gracious, and wise He is by His dealings with fallen humanity. **God allows us to live out our lives, even making many mistakes**, because He can then extend His grace to us and

restore us, until we are ultimately sitting at the right hand of Jesus Christ on His throne (Rev. 3:21, Ephesians 2:6). **God will "put to shame" all the "mighty ones"** and "rulers of this age" (I Corinthians 2:6-9) who have tried to overthrow God's kingdom, ever since Lucifer (Satan) first rebelled against God and tried to take over His throne. God will be glorified as He SHOWS Satan and fallen humanity (this whole world system is controlled by Satan, "the PRINCE of the power of the air") that they will not triumph over Him, and He uses "the weak and foolish" ones of the earth to accomplish His plan.

- **Ephesians 2:1-10** "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you once walked **according to the course (system) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience: among whom we also all conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, just as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ (by grace are you saved)"; and has raised us up together, and has made us to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; **that in the ages to come, He might SHOW the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus**. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast. For **we are His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus **for (for the purpose of) good works**, which God has **PREPARED BEFOREHAND** that we should walk in them."
- **Ephesians 3:1-11** "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles -- If indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation **He made known to me the mystery** (as I wrote before in a few words), by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And to make all people see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; **to the INTENT that now the manifold wisdom of God might be MADE KNOWN by the CHURCH to the PRINCIPALITIES and POWERS in the heavenly places, according to the eternal PURPOSE which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**"
- **Isaiah 14:12-17** "How you have fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, '**I will** ascend to heaven; **I will** exalt my throne above the stars of God, and **I will** sit on the mount of the assembly in the recesses of the north. **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I WILL** make myself like the Most High.'"
- **Revelation 12:7-11** "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his ANGELS waging war with the dragon. And **the DRAGON and his angels** waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old, who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down (cast out) with him."