

**The Hill (B.A.S.I.C. Training)**

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**Winter 2012**

We trust that you are encouraged in the Lord. Thank you for loving Jesus, and thank you for loving us. It is impossible to describe what your friendship, prayers, and support have meant over the years.

### **Ministry News**

The longer that Kim, Benjamin, and I live on this hill, the more we are committed to God's call. We are extremely blessed to work alongside Rick and Donna Underhill, who not only live on ministry property, across the field in fact, but basically oversee everything that transpires administratively. This has freed me to study, write, and teach (in that order)—that to which I have been called. It has also provided ample time to be a husband and dad, the highest calling of all. Rick is a gifted teacher, and God is opening doors for him to minister not only here on the hill but in churches, Bible studies, and discipleship groups as well.

The nature of this ministry allows us (all who live here) to associate with believers from a variety of locations and theological backgrounds. As a result, we are privileged to hear, firsthand, what is transpiring in the overall body of Christ. Some of what we are told is extremely encouraging. Much is not. We are thankful for what we have learned, but as you know knowledge yields responsibility. Therefore, if you knew that a tsunami was forecast to pillage your hometown, would you warn your fellow citizens of the impending danger? Of course you would. If you realized, on the other hand, that a theological tsunami was outside your church doors, would you warn your fellow believers of its existence? Hopefully you would.

My point is this: A theological tsunami is headed for America. Some of its winds and torrential rains have already arrived, but few understand the magnitude of its overall force. It will hit shore in the not too distant future, so there is little time to remain passive and unconcerned. Either flee by running to safety, or pretend that it doesn't exist by ignoring the warning. The choice is yours. Yes, it is coming, and the church (the overall body of Christ) is anything but ready. The tsunami is the elevation of God's sovereignty above God's love, portraying Him as determining man's destiny by means of election and predestination prior to man's birth. It also portrays Him as the cause of all things. This is a huge movement, actually the resurrection of a previous movement, sweeping away our kids in droves.

I have written the preceding for many reasons, one of which is our involvement with youth and college students from different areas of this country. Even though believers of all ages visit the hill, it is the college students who keep us abreast of the latest trends within Christendom. No doubt, if the college students of our land can be influenced to believe a certain way, their children will probably follow in their footsteps, especially if their parents are trained to disciple their kids according to their perception of the truth. Consequently, it is the institutions of higher learning that are being targeted. No wonder parents contact us with concerns for their offspring who are studying at the university level. When the parents call, it is not to address the sometimes bazaar secular classroom instruction. Such instruction is expected, to a certain degree at least. They are calling, rather, with concerns regarding the theology their offspring are being exposed to through believers on the university campuses.

Thus, I was thrilled when a door opened at Murray State University to present the *God's Heart* series, a study that addresses topics such as sovereignty, election, predestination, depravity, faith, atonement, and etc. In fact, it was two campus ministers, both of which I highly respect, who encouraged me to teach the class. I was anything but shocked when one of them stated that he had never seen students so confused in regard to their views of the Scriptures. It has been a tremendous blessing to return to campus, and what I have observed confirms to an ever increasing degree that a tsunami is speeding our way. Let me explain.

The first night of class I asked a simple question. I asked if the subjects of predestination and election were being debated on campus. Realizing that such subjects are discussed on a regular basis not only at Murray State, but on almost every college campus in America, I was surprised by their response. Their response was no response. In other words, they initially sat and said nothing. After overcoming the chill of the moment, I collected myself and stated, “You mean the subjects of predestination and election are not a source of contention on this campus?” Again there was silence. It was an amazing sight, for their body language was screaming while their vocal cords remained paralyzed. What was their problem? They had been led to believe (by believers on campus) that the sovereignty of God and the free will of man cannot be reconciled void of contradiction. The resulting confusion left them not only speechless, but wondering what to believe concerning the God they had loved and known in their pre-college world. Was He different than they had supposed? They could not imagine that He predestined and elected certain persons to salvation, never granting the remainder the freedom to believe, and followed by condemning them (the remainder) for failing to believe. Such a scenario would make Him totally unjust. Yet, no one was teaching them how to refute such thinking. In fact, one student approached me after class, and with tears in her eyes, stated: “I am here tonight for one reason, for I am on the verge of giving up. If the God of the Bible is the God being portrayed in many circles on this campus, I have no hope. This is my last stop before completely walking away from the faith.” The great news is that this student today has answers to defend what she believes regarding these highly controversial doctrinal issues.

These students, as a result of God’s work in their lives, are learning to defend (from a Scriptural basis) their doctrinal positions regarding sovereignty, predestination, election, depravity, and etc. In other words, they know that God does not determine man’s destiny before man is born. They also understand, from a Scriptural basis, that the depraved can exercise personal repentance and faith prior to being spiritually regenerated—without their faith being a work. Yes, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man can be reconciled void of contradiction. Their confidence is abounding, and more importantly, they have hope.

This next semester at Murray State, we will study the first part of the four part *God’s Heart* series. It is titled, *God’s Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination*, and is being published at this present time. In fact, it will be available by the time you receive this newsletter. The remaining three parts of the series, *God’s Heart as it Relates to Sovereignty/Free Will*, *God’s Heart as it Relates to Depravity*, and *God’s Heart as it Relates to Election/Atonement/Grace/Perseverance*, will be published as soon as possible. Never has a series challenged and encouraged me like this one. In fact, it has made a greater difference in my perception of God than anything I have studied and written to date. Jehovah truly is a sovereign God Who will never, under any circumstance, allow His sovereignty to override His love.

I am also, at the present time, writing and teaching an advanced version of the *Romans 1-8* course. I am teaching this on Tuesday nights here on the hill and will be doing so for the next couple of semesters. You can follow online if you like. I am also rewriting the introductory version of the *Romans 1-8* study, which should be available in a few weeks. Both of these *Romans 1-8* studies, along with the *God’s Heart* series, were generated due to the major theological shift that is occurring within Christendom. I will also write and teach a course on Romans 9-11 once the advanced *Romans 1-8* series is completed. Yes, a tsunami is coming, and we must be prepared.

Since receiving Christ, almost forty years ago, a proper view of God has been my greatest passion. It is of utmost importance, for I can properly portray Him to others only if I perceive Him correctly myself. Should God determine man’s destiny before man is born, leaving man with no choice in the matter, He would prove Himself unjust by condemning those who have no opportunity to believe. Should this describe His character, yielding to “mystery” would be a necessity while seeking answers to the resulting contradictions. Yet, yielding to “mystery” is no answer at all. After all, should God be a contradiction, He cannot be the source of truth, and therefore, cannot be God.

I have selected a small portion of *God’s Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination* to serve as this publication’s Thoughts from the Hill. If you desire to dig deeper, just get in touch.

*Thoughts from the Hill*

The key to a proper view of predestination, election, God's foreknowledge and etc. is to understand what the Scriptures teach regarding God's purposes (plans), decrees, and works. We will start by confirming that God is "*eternal*"—that He has always existed:

*"The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; And He drove out the enemy from before you, And said, 'Destroy!'" (Deuteronomy 33:27)*

Because God's purposes (plans) are "*eternal*" (Ephesians 3:11; 2Timothy 1:9), He has always known them; they have always existed within His heart.

*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Ephesians 3:11 NAS)*

*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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, (2 Timothy 1:9 NAS)*

Because the same Greek word used for "*eternal*" in Ephesians 3:11 is used to describe the eternal King of the universe in 1Timothy 1:17, we can know that God's purposes are eternal as well.

*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1Timothy 1:17 KJV)*

According to Daniel 11:36b, the function of a "*decree*" is to establish the certainty of the fulfillment of a plan or purpose.

*"Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. (Daniel 11:36 NAS)*

Undoubtedly, if no "*decree*" exists, the fulfillment of a purpose or plan is unattainable.

God's purposes are "*eternal*" (Ephesians 3:11; 2Timothy 1:9) because they have always existed within His heart. In addition, His decrees, which guarantee the certainty of the fulfillment of His purposes, are also "*eternal*," as confirmed by Jeremiah 5:22.

*'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD.' Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it. (Jeremiah 5:22 NAS)*

Foreknow is from the Greek word *pro-ginosko*—*pro* meaning "previous" and *ginosko* meaning "knowledge." Thus, foreknow means "to know beforehand in the sense of foreseeing." God, from His elevated position above the earth (Isaiah 40:22), can view all events from eternity past through eternity future throughout His eternal existence. In other words, He constantly views all events, regardless of when they transpire. Consequently, God's foreknowledge is eternal, meaning that it has always existed. Taking this input we can draw the following conclusions.

God's eternally known works are accomplished through His eternal decrees, which make certain the fulfillment of His eternal purposes or plans. Thus, if God's decrees have always existed, they have never been future to Him. To state it differently, God can't foreknow (know beforehand) what has always existed. After all, it is impossible to foreknow that which has no beginning. Consequently, God cannot foreknow an eternal decree.

This means that He could not have elected and predestined believers to salvation by means of an eternal decree. New Testament believers are elected to office (position) and predestined to receive a new body (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:23) when they exercise repentance and faith (while depraved) and are

made new. Thus, if you are a believer, you were elected and predestined to blessing the moment you were placed in Christ—after repenting and believing while depraved. You were not elected and predestined to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Note: *God's Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination* addresses this subject extensively. This is displayed graphically in the following diagram:

## Why God's Foreknowledge Cannot Precede His Eternal Decrees

FOREKNOWLEDGE	Predestination of the believer Election/the believer's chosenness
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Scripture requires God's foreknowledge (which means to know beforehand) to precede the predestination and election (choosing) of a New Testament believer.

*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (Romans 8:29)*

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood : May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. (1Peter 1:1-2)*

Should God's foreknowledge, meaning "to know beforehand," precede His eternal decrees, eternity would have a beginning (a starting point)—a total impossibility. Thus, it is not possible for New Testament believers to have been elected and predestined to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree.

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Isn't it fun to think through what we believe? Have a great 2012 enjoying Jesus.

### Events to Consider Attending on the Hill

<u>January 13-15, 2012</u>	Annual Winter Youth Retreat
<u>January 17, 2012</u>	Tuesday night Bible study (7:00 pm). An advanced study of Romans 1-8
<u>April 26-29, 2012</u>	Annual Men's Retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages.
<u>July 8-14, 2012</u>	Annual Summer Camp for youth (ages 13-18)
<u>August 5-6, 2012</u>	Annual Romans Retreat
<u>September 2-3, 2012</u>	Discipleship Retreat
<u>October 14-16, 2012</u>	Annual Fall Retreat for couples and singles