

Seeking God'S Will (Part Six): Forethought

Consider the End!

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Well, it is the week of Thanksgiving, and I thought I would give you an illustration, at least, that went with it so that it would be timely. It has been nearly 400 years ago—in 1620 AD—that the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock on the Massachusetts coast of North America. Remember that it was November; it was very late in the year. When they debarked from the Mayflower, there were about one hundred people who landed upon this shore and began to set up a little bit of a colony.

But in that first year, it was a very hard winter. The pilgrims did establish a town site, and they began to mark things off for where they wanted to build, but they also endured many trials that winter and lost about half of the colonists to sickness.

In the spring, they elected a government, making William Bradford governor. He had that office off and on for more than 30 years. He was one of the lucky ones that survived that first winter. He actually got the sickness, and thought he was on his deathbed, but he came through it all and lived until about 1657.

Now, in October in the autumn of 1621, not quite a year after their arrival, they held a harvest festival. In attendance were 50 free Englishmen (as they called themselves)—the surviving Pilgrims—along with 90 Wampanuag Indians. They were outnumbered two to one by their Indian guests. The celebration that they enjoyed lasted for three days, and it included various types of waterfowl, wild turkey, and fish caught by the colonists; also five deer brought by the Indians.

It is hard for me to imagine that those five deer were able to feed 143 people over three days, but I guess with all the waterfowl, fish, and turkey, they made it all stretch.

What is tragic about this particular feast—this first Thanksgiving as we have come to call it—there were only four adult women in attendance, survivors of the first year.

This is what has become known as the First Thanksgiving. But, the pilgrims did not think of it as a thanksgiving festival, but rather only a harvest festival. Their thanksgiving was a solemn ceremony in praise and thanks to God for the congregation's blessings. They considered themselves the church in the wilderness.

Now, just after this celebration, within about a month, a ship arrived with new colonists.

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This strained the colony's ability to feed everyone. This was especially because they had spent a great deal of their time that spring and summer—the typical growing seasons—working on and building their fortifications. They were afraid of the Indians. They were more afraid of the Indians than they were about starving. So they failed to hunt, fish, and preserve other food that was in the forest around them. However, even though it was a bit tough in the second winter, the 85 colonists did pretty well. And in the next year with other ships coming bringing more colonists to the colony, their ranks swelled to 180 people.

By 1630, ten years after they had first arrived, there were almost 300 people there; by 1643, twenty-three years from their founding, they numbered 2000 people, huddled there on the east coast of Massachusetts.

Yet even with that level of growth, they went from 100 to 2000 in 23 years, the early settlers in America never conceived of a nation on these shores teeming with 300 million people like we do today. They had no ability to perceive that their descendants would spread from sea to shining sea; that they would scale those purple mountains; that they would spread across the fruited plain, establishing a nation of this size and wealth.

First of all, they had no idea how big North America really was. Nobody had been able to get to the other side yet—nobody, really, had tried at this point. (There may have been some Spanish explorers down south who might have.)

But, they had no idea, especially seeing the way that it was there in Massachusetts, how fertile this nation is; how well watered it is; how much mineral wealth and other things that this land has. They could not see it. They “couldn't see the forest for the trees” as it were. Here, they were surrounded by all this natural beauty such as the forest, which stretched as far as the eye could see, with all kinds of animals living in it. They did not realize that once they cleared those trees off the land and began planting that it was very fertile.

But, most of them were of little or no agricultural background. When they came over, they had to ask the Indians how to do things. And the Indians would show them how to plant with fish included in the soil. They then were able to produce a bit of a crop.

They could not see what this nation could become—what this land could produce. They had a difficult enough time trying to support a hundred hungry mouths. They struggled for a few years.

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Of course, there were the Indians, too. They were trembling in fear of an Indian attack. It was interesting, though, that the pilgrims were able to purchase land from them, for a pittance, cheating them out of their land.

Usually, the Indians were touchy and unreliable. You never knew whether they understood what you meant by buying the land or just using it while they owned it. There were frequent conflicts with them because of these misunderstandings and from time to time there was bloodshed, and it usually turned out in the pilgrim's favor rather than the Indian's. Very quickly, through disease and the skirmishes that took place in those first few decades, the Indians were pushed further and further away from the colony.

But, early on, the pilgrims were not strong enough to force them out. They had to live with them, and for the first years huddled in fear for their lives and spending more time building fortifications rather than growing, hunting, and preserving food.

The climate was terrible in that it was discouraging. I am sure that they had in their minds the failed Roanoke Colony, and after that first winter when they lost half their people, they must have thought that they would go the same way, because they just could not seem to be able to endure the hardships there. The summers were pleasant at that latitude, but the winters were horrible. They came early and stayed late, making the growing season rather short—far shorter than they would have liked to have had.

There was a large amount of snow and ice which they were not used to. It oftentimes buried their homes. They just were not prepared for that harsh of a climate. In fact, because of these harsh conditions, they considered the new world to be quite inhospitable. They had to fight for everything that they produced and any kind of good that they might get out of it.

There was no way in those first few years that any one of them could envision themselves and their children taming the American wilderness, building innumerable towns and cities across this land, and producing the vast wealth that America is known for today.

You know, the pilgrims are very little different from us in that way. They could envision the new world, the American shore, as a kind of Promised Land where they could flee from religious persecution in Europe and start new lives of freedom. They could see that. That is why they came. But while they could imagine worshipping freely, they proved to have very little skill in the matter of practical foresight. All they had in mind was the ideal of being able to practice their religion as they saw fit.

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But, they did not see, did not anticipate, these great obstacles that would be thrown up in front of them—not in the area of freedom of worship, but rather in all these other areas. And so they went across the sea from Holland to North America in hope, but so very unprepared for the pioneer life in the American wilderness, cut off from civilization for 362 days in the year.

In many respects they just simply blundered forward, paying a heavy toll for their inability to consider the path before them. Although you have to give them credit—they *were* ultimately successful.

So, this is the sixth sermon in my series on seeking God's will. As I have reminded you each time, this is based on the verse found in Ephesians 5:17, "Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is"—a command from the apostle Paul to study so that we can find understanding in God's will. I have taken this as a challenge to present to you a study on various traits of God's character so that we can understand these and be able to figure out God's will in practical situations in our own lives. He always acts according to His character. So, His will is going to be according to His character.

So, we can then learn to act and react just as He does in our dealings with one another, where the rubber meets the road—that is where we really need to work on growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, in our relationships with one another. Not that in any other situation it is not necessary, but these are the ones that affect our relations with one another, our dealings with one another, and our unity.

In today's sermon we are going to look at God's ability to foresee end results, which is probably a trait of His character that you have not thought of very much, but we are going to look into His forethought.

It is a very important character trait and attribute of His. In fact, I once saw a preacher who had given a sermon on foresight, or forethought, and he went so far as to say that God's foresight—His forethought—is the basis for His love and grace. Everything that He does has His vision of what He wants us to become.

This passage, in Deuteronomy 32, is from the great song of Moses, which we covered at the Feast just a few weeks ago when we surveyed the various songs of Moses.

This is a prophecy of the general course of Israel history, and we can get some clues out of this about the character of the Israelites.

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Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun [a code name for Israel] grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

This is saying that once Israel got to the point that they were wealthy—had leisure time, had many good things—they rebelled; they had time to forget God. They were not anymore thankful for the things that He had given them, and they wandered away.

Deuteronomy 32:16-20 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you. And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said, 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be. .

Notice that He then figures out what their end will be.

Deuteronomy 32:20 For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith.

So, what He decides to do is,

Deuteronomy 32:23-25 I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword shall destroy outside; there shall be terror within for the young man and virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs.

This next passage is God's explanation:

Deuteronomy 32:28-30 For they are a nation void of counsel, nor is there any understanding in them. Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How could one chase a

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thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had surrendered them?

So we see a complete reversal of fortunes in Israel. They had been fat, meaning that they had great wealth, having good things to enjoy in their lives, but they rebelled. Before, they had been the ones that one would chase a hundred or ten would chase a thousand. But, it had gotten to the point, even though God had done all of these things, all these disasters upon them, to get them to change, that they did not. So He said, "Now it is to the point where one of their enemies chases a thousand Israelites! And two puts ten thousand of them to flight." And the reason why is because God, their Rock, had given them over to their own devices, and the Lord, it says, surrendered them or had given them up. He had just let them go their own way and reap the bitter fruit of their doings.

Verses 28 and 29 are the key, here. They spell out God's summation of the basic problem with Israel. He says that they are void of counsel and are without understanding. That is the bottom line there. They are void of counsel and without understanding. In other words, they refused to listen to good sense. That is what void of counsel is. It means that when somebody gave them good advice, they spurned it and rejected it. In a spiritual sense, they ignored or rejected the truth that is staring them in the face.

Israel, through most of its history has had the truth available to them. In Old Testament times, they had the Pentateuch available to them, as well as other books of the Bible; they had prophets; they had righteous kings at times; they had the Levites who should have taught them. And of course, going forward, they were the ones where Christianity really flourished. And so, the Bible, then, was the basis for life in their nations.

They had access to it; they should have been able to understand the things that God wanted them to do, because it was there. They could go to their local church, in England, and there would be a Bible chained to a stand where they could read it (if they could read). If needed, they could ask for a priest or minister to read it to them. Churches were open. They could go there every Sunday and they could hear the Bible expounded. The entire culture was based on the principles of Christianity.

It was not done perfectly by any stretch. But, they did have it available to them. This is why God said in Amos 3 that they should have known better. They had it all. They were the only ones in the entire world that had God so close to them. But, they foolishly rejected the obvious. All of that obvious truth was right there for them to see.

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What God gets to in Deuteronomy 32 is that they refused to link their problems—the catastrophes that were going on, the oppressions that they were undergoing, the wars that they were in—they refused to link those things to their evil conduct, and their divorced relationship with God, that they had ever done something to make God go far away from them. And, as Isaiah 59 says, it was their sins that separated them from their God.

For some reason, it is something in the Israelite psyche—they could not perceive how their faithlessness and their misconduct were leading in a very straightforward cause-and-effect manner to their destruction. They could not put the two together. And throughout their entire history, it worked out this way. It is still the same even today.

Here we are in Deuteronomy 32, which is very early in Israel's history. Then, there is the passage in Haggai 1 as Judah was returning from their exile from Babylon, and they were in a very similar way to our pilgrims, coming from Babylon like pilgrims into the land. And it was their job to build the Temple again. That is why they came back in the first place.

But what did they do? They started out okay, but soon left off building the Temple. And God sends Haggai the prophet to tell them, “Consider your ways!” He says this at least twice in the first chapter. He said to them, “Don't you understand the reason why your crops are not growing? Why is there a drought? Why is it you can't do anything, finish anything, or get anything done? Consider your ways! The reason why these things are happening is because you are not following through on the commands I gave you to return to this place and build the Temple!”

These people, it says, were trying to live in their paneled houses doing what they wanted to do to get themselves up and prosperous, while they had forgotten God. They put Him on a shelf, and they were not doing the things that He had brought them back to the land to do. They could not see the connection between their problems and their forgetting what God had told them to do.

So, it should not be any surprise to us that this nation is doing the same thing now. God has given tremendous blessings to this nation. And not just to this nation only, but all of Joseph and all of Israel. We have a life that kings in ancient times would have loved to have lived.

We have abilities to do things that most people in history would have claimed impossible to do. I mean even simple things, like speaking on the telephone. You can call anywhere on the face of the earth and within seconds you are connected with someone

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who in these other people's days would never see or have the ability to travel that far. Travel is another thing, too.

Just think of the amazing abilities that we have in this day to mass produce items. Think of that comforter that I was talking about a few minutes ago. That is the sort of thing that we take for granted. But, these are all products of the blessings of God upon this land—that we are not only able to produce those things, but we have the materials to produce them, and to do it in vast quantities and deliver them out to people all over this nation and to the whole world at a cheap price. I do not know how much our comforter was, but it was just a few dollars compared to what the labor would cost and the materials. It would be very expensive for a lady or a group of ladies doing it together, over who knows how many weeks it would take them to put one of those things together, without the sewing machines and other things that we have. We just do not understand; we take them for granted all of the time.

We just cannot seem to put that together with God, and we cannot seem to put together what we are going through now and understand that things are going badly, because we have forsaken God. We do not make the connections. It is sort of an “out of sight, out of mind” type of thing. We do not see God right here next to us, giving us money, or allowing us to do these things. We do not see Him opening the doors, but He is doing them just the same. Because these things are done without our knowledge, we forget Him. We do not make the connection.

This, as mentioned before, goes for the good things His does as well as the bad things that He allows to happen. We just do not make the connection when we should. We should be grateful for the things that He gives, and also for the bad things. We should take them as warnings to turn from our evil ways. All of us, not just those people out there, but we should take the warning and turn our lives around.

Deuteronomy 32:29 Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

We should really take this to heart. I mean, we, here in this room, those listening through the computer or telephone, and those who are reading this transcript should take this to heart, because most of us have come out of that same culture that does not want to link God with good things or bad things. Most of us have lived in or have been born in and grown up in an Israelitish culture. So, we are likely to have this same problem of shortsightedness.

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Most of us, sadly, tend not to look much further ahead than the ends of our noses, because we have grown up in a culture that is in the “now” as it were. We have grown up in a culture where we want everything immediately. We are “current” people. We are “present-tense” people. We are “contemporary.” We are immediate; we are instant; we like things now, and we do not think very much about the past, and we certainly do not think much about the future. We pay very little attention to these things. We are all about what is going on right now.

It is a human thing, because this is where we live. We live in “now.” We do not live anymore in the past or we should not. We are not yet in the future. So, we tend to concentrate on the present. But, God does not do that. And, we are trying to become like Him.

Sure, God lives now, but He has His mind focused on what is coming down the road, and where He is trying to get us to be. He also has one eye looking back, as it were, for our benefit, so that we can see the things that have gone on, take those things to heart, and learn from them.

So, He is the perfect example of using all of time to get us to a place to where He wants us to be.

Now, actually verse 29 is very poignant because what God is saying is not, “Oh that they were wise that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.” God is saying, rather, “Oh! Oh that they were wise, that they were to consider their latter end!” He is upset. There is a bit of grief in it. He has a yearning for His people to do what is right. He wants them to have this quality He has of considering the end before all their actions take place. That they would understand the law of cause and effect; that when certain things happen, they are going to produce a certain effect. It is a law. That is the way that it works.

As Paul put it in Galatians 6:7, “Whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap.” If you do good, you are going to reap good in return. It is a reciprocal thing. But, if you do evil, evil will come back on you, too. It is just the way that it works. It is cause and effect.

You cannot expect to get, as Jesus puts it, good fruit from a bad tree. A bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree produces good fruit. That is the law of cause and effect. God wants His people to understand this, both physical Israel and spiritual Israel. He wants us to understand this very simple concept. But we have such a hard time with it. I do not know why.

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He gives this forlorn cry about His people, because their lack of foresight is a major factor in their misery. They would not be galloping toward destruction if they would only look ahead and see that the path ends on a cliff, and they were about to go into the abyss. But they do not. They are back there just yipping it up with their hats in the air and having a good old time, doing whatever they want to do, and not understanding that God says that it will end in destruction.

All they need to do is stop, get off the horse, and think for a minute about the trajectory of their actions. It does not take much effort or even much thought! It just needs to be done! It does not take much time. You just need to *stop and consider*.

Where is this action going to take me? If I stopped and did something else, where would that take me? Which of these choices (maybe more than two) is the best one? Which choice will lead, ultimately, to the better or best end?

There are some people, though, who do that. But (using the game of chess metaphor), they only think forward one move, rather than thinking forward several moves. They might say something like, "Oh this is a good thing, because it leads to this," not knowing that this leads to this other thing, which leads to another, and suddenly they are off the cliff anyway.

It does take a little bit of effort. But we must learn to think further down the road than we do. We need to get into the habit of doing it, if only to think in a short manner at first, until we can get to seeing further down the road. We will get that later.

Now, the word "consider" that we find in verse 29 is the Hebrew word "beyn." It is Strong's number 995. It simply means "to observe; to mark; to give heed to; to distinguish; to consider with attention." What this describes is the thoughtful person who takes the time to observe, not just the things, but also what is really going on. He does not just see a bird and think, "Oh, there's a bird there." He says, "Hmm. I wonder what that bird is doing." Not simply that there is a bird there, but he takes the time to consider, to distinguish, what makes that bird different, makes that bird do what it does; he thinks about things; he considers. That is what this word "beyn" means.

This person who considers pays attention, perceives more than just the obvious (what is on the surface) notes what is important and considers what might happen next. And that is the important thing.

Such a person is probably known by others as discerning or perceptive. Perhaps they think of them as insightful or even (after a period of time) a visionary. In business, such

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a person is known as a strategic thinker—a person who maps things out, who is able to play a game of chess four, five, or even six moves in advance, because he knows how things are going to go. This move will cause this counter move, and this next move will cause another counter move—seeing how things will probably play out down the road.

You could even, in a negative manner, call such a person, calculating. Usually a calculating person is thought of in a negative sense. He is thinking, “How can I take advantage of this situation?” But the flipside of this is someone who is concerned about how things are progressing and makes the most of plans so that the best things will result in the end.

Of course, we are looking at God and His character traits. So, we are going to look at a few examples of God using this quality of forethought—considering the end. Of course, every act of God is a lesson in forethought.

Consider the creation. The design of creation is an endless illustration of God’s forethought, because He prepared the earth and everything in it to support the lives of all the creatures, but especially mankind. He thought about this earth for thousands of years before He actually created it, and He put all these little things in here that we are not even aware of, many of which we are just discovering today, how all the things work together so that there could be life on this planet. (I am not talking about major things like air. This is obvious. We have to breathe. He put water on the earth so we could drink. He put soil on the earth so we could plant crops. Those are major things that He thought of well in advance.)

But, think about the “minor” things, too, that we often do not think about or we are just now discovering. These would be things like all the microbes in the soil and various other places that are beneficial to us. Not all microbes are bad. Each microbe was created to do a certain thing and God put within its DNA the ability to adapt and change to handle problems as they come along. Some of those microbes live in us, and they help us to digest our food better, doing things within our bodies that we are not aware of. Think of things like yeast. God put it on earth to help break things down through fermentation, which we have discovered can bring us enjoyment. We get to drink beer and wine, and we get to eat bread. This is all because God had the forethought to create yeast on the earth.

Think of all of the various essences and oils in plants that are being discovered now in the Amazon and other places around the world that can be used as medicines. God thought forward to a time when mankind would be able to recognize those things, harvest, and use them.

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Think of all the minerals, the metals, and all the various combinations thereof that we can use to make our goods and have lives upon this earth. We have electricity that gives us light; we put various mineral ores together and make alloys that can be used to manufacture airplanes and automobiles that are strong yet lightweight. Think of all those things that God made—He had the forethought to make—so that we someday down the line would be able to use. It is just an amazing thing to think about God's foresight.

This is why God, as found in Genesis 1:31, said that all He had made was very good. It was all going to work together because of the way that He had created it.

In Genesis 3, we will see the first time that God reacts with foresight to something that the first human beings did.

Genesis 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Obviously, this is right after Adam's sin and after God curses the serpent, Adam, and Eve for what they had done in their part of the transgression. God is shown considering and voicing a terrible possibility that He could foresee happening if He did not take action. Adam and Eve might decide to go and eat from the Tree of Life, too. If they did, not only would they be sinful creatures subject to Satan's influence (having already shown that they were), but that they would also have eternal life on top of this sinful occurrence. This would only be a repetition of the life of Satan the Devil. They would be "little satans"—miserable, rebellious; causing endless harm and destruction not only to them, but everyone else in the whole world to come after them. So, God considered and took action to cut them off from it.

As an aside, the beginning of verse 22 is mistranslated badly. I am surprised that it has gotten this far without being corrected in all of the various translations that we have. It almost sounds like when He said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil," that He is threatened. "Oh! Watch out! They might take of the Tree of Life and be like Us. We don't want that!" But, this is not what He is saying. The Hebrew expresses sadness and compassion from God, not surprise.

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This is how I would translate it: God says, “Look what has become of the man who was as one of Us, but now knows good and evil.” Adam was like God before he sinned; like God in that they were pure, innocent, and had not sinned. But now that they had sinned, they were corrupted. Now they are not like God anymore. That is what God is saying. God shows His grief that the idyllic life of His creation had come to an end in sin. He also knows that man’s course from that time forth was going to be hard and miserable, and would only end in death. So He says, after this thought, “Let Us not allow this to get any worse. Let Us do something to keep this from becoming a horrible unmitigated disaster.” And so, He expels them from the Garden of Eden and cuts off access to Himself and to His Spirit, until He chooses to open it again.

Now, this is God’s thought processes, if you look at it this way: He considers the results of Adam and Eve’s actions and His thought process was very simple and clear. It is A plus B equals C. It is very logical. It moves straight forward. He says, “A sinful nature plus eternal life equals unmitigated disaster.” This would be the most horrible thing to occur, so the wise course of action was for Him to disallow His offer of eternal life in the form of the Tree of Life. This was not the time, now.

There would be a time for the Tree of Life; we see it at the end of the book in Revelation 22. But, now, this was not the time. So, He cut it off. From this point onward, He determined, and I am absolutely sure that He had planned it this way from the beginning, that mankind would have to take a different course to eternal life—a much harder one involving sacrifice, repentance, growing, and overcoming. All ideas of “easy grace” were off the table.

This is what taking from the Tree of Life would have been—a type of easy grace, just take of the fruit of the tree, there was not much to do. But now, because of sin, they would have to suffer, sacrifice, repent, overcome, and grow.

In this chapter itself, is a very contrary illustration of forethought. Just think of Adam and Eve. What did they do? They did not think at all! This is how simple it was: There were two trees, one of which was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and other tree, the Tree of Life. That was all. That is all that they had to choose between—just these two trees. So they had a decision to make. Just a little consideration, or a few minutes of deep thought. Think about the choice: the Tree of Life equates to living forever, never dying, never having to worry about your health, and receiving all the power and glory of being in the God family.

Sounds good does it not? But did they ever think of that?

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“Hey, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now there is some good looking fruit! Looks like it is good for food! My! Isn't it pretty? I think it will make me wise.”

So they eat it. Was that not stupid? There was no forethought regarding the future. All they thought of was things such as is found in I John 2:15: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. That is all they thought of. They just thought about themselves and how this fruit might taste. “Oh, and didn't it look nice?” That is all it was. They did not take the time to think things through. They based their decision to eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil on stupid sinful lusts. And their children have been doing the very same things ever since. With just a very few exceptions. Those who have been called to know otherwise. But even we still do it quite a bit.

Notice a contrast that is amazing. Please turn to Philippians 2 and we will see that Christ's thought was much further down the line than theirs was.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This happened long before the episode in the Garden of Eden, at least I think it did. He must have known—it says from before the foundation of the world that He was going to do this.

We see here in these verses that the Word of God, who became Jesus Christ, thought this through, and He saw what the end result would be. He did not consider that the losses that He would take in the meantime were any reason not to do it. He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, meaning that He was willing to give up His prerogatives as God, and then be made into a man, which was a real come-down for Him, being what He was. Then, not only becoming a man, but He had to go through all those things that people go through—from babyhood through teenagehood through adulthood. Then He had to start a ministry, be persecuted, arrested, horribly beaten, bloodied, put to death, and then lay in the grave for three days and three nights.

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But despite all that intervening humiliation, loneliness, sacrifice, pain, and death, He saw the glory, honor, and eternal life not just for Himself, but also for billions of people who would come under His blood and become children of God.

Jot down Hebrews 12:2, and Hebrews 2:9-11, where it says that He despised the shame, so that we can have what He has, the joy that was set before Him.

So, this is the kind of mind that God wants to be in us—a mind that considers the end of a thing. And not just the good parts but also considers the bad parts too, and makes one think like Jesus did, whether going through the bad stuff to a better end might be better than not going through the bad stuff, taking a shortcut to an inferior end. We do not have the wisdom of God to make some of those decisions, but that is the kind of mind He wants to be developing in us, so that we can see that the sacrifices that are before us are necessary and good for us to go through in order to reach the goal that He has for us. We are not to think like people think anymore, wanting all the good things. Sometimes you have to take some lowliness and humility and suffering to get to where we need to go.

The life of Jesus while He was a man contains many examples of forethought. We are not going to go through but one. They are not couched in terms of forethought. They do not begin by saying, “Now Jesus sat down on a rock and considered this, that, and the other thing.” It just tells us what He did.

There are little vignettes through His gospels where it says something like, “He traveled to a certain place, or took a certain road, or went this certain way in order not to come in contact with the Jews, or some other group of people.” Or that He went out of His way to go through Samaria, rather than to go another way, because He wanted to preach in Samaria. Or He went up to Tyre and Sidon and He preached there because He wanted to reach those people. He did these sorts of things in order to preach the gospel sometimes, but other times to avoid persecution, because He knew His time was not yet. And so, He wisely thought ahead and concluded, “We better not go to Judea, now. There's a price on my head down there. Let's stay here instead,” and so on.

There are several cases in the gospels where He would caution a person, “Don't tell what happened to you; don't tell anybody that I've healed you.” The reason would often be that He did not want His popularity to get so high that it would cause a premature confrontation with the authorities. He wanted to keep things down low for a while so that He could preach longer to more people and get around to all the places He wanted to go.

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But at other times He would provoke a reaction from the Pharisees, so that they might argue as they always did. This would often open up a chance for Him to preach on certain subject or to get an important point across. Occasionally He would even do this to His disciples, saying something like, "Who do men say that I am," or maybe He would ask some leading question so that He would get a reaction from them, and then be able to teach them an important lesson about discipleship, leadership, or some other topic. He thought these things through.

What do you think He was doing when He would go up on the mountain to pray? He was not just praying, but He was planning, He was figuring things out, He was asking God to lead Him, guide Him, and help Him in all these things that He needed to do in this very jam-packed 3 ½ years where He needed to get all these things into the minds of His disciples so that they would also be put into the Bible, so that they would be available to all of us.

So, He had to think these things through and work them out. He was very deliberate in the way that He conducted His ministry to get the most out of it Himself, for what He had to do, as well as to make the best witness for the disciples, for the people, and ultimately for all of us. So, He thought these things through to get the greatest effect out of the time that He had.

Please turn to John 11 and we will see one of these. This passage is about Lazarus' death and resurrection.

John 11:4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

John 11:6-11 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

John 11:14-17 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And I am

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glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him." Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

We can already see these things happening. He knew that His time was coming to an end. He knew that Passover was coming in just a little while. And, it was time to glorify God in a stunning manner with a fantastic miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, showing His great power and divinity. He had to put it in their face to get the ball rolling.

He perceived because He had thought this through that such a huge splash of a miracle would be the final straw in the Jew's case against Him, and they would step up their efforts to arrest Him and crucify Him. Thus the mention in verse 3, that the Son of Man might be glorified through it. So, He was not only going to glorify God in doing the miracle, but He would ultimately also glorify Himself through this because it would lead to His death, and then His resurrection, and all that would follow that.

He saw that if He worked these things out this way, ultimately all this good would come from it.

Now it says that Lazarus waited there not only dead, but in the tomb four days. He did this because it was pharisaic tradition that the soul hovered about the body for about 3 days, and then when it figured out that body was actually dead and starting to decompose, it would flit off to where it was going. So, Jesus, then, wanted to discount this thing as well, and to show that He could resurrect even those corpses that had begun to rot and restore them completely well and whole, just like He will do in the last day.

So, His consideration of this matter, and His forethought regarding how matters would play out, made this plan work to God's glory.

It is interesting that He talks about (in verses 9 and 10) walking in the day and seeing the light of the world. This is a tremendous key in using godly foresight. Christ is the light of the world, and we are walking in the day if we are conducting our lives according to His teaching and His examples. If we are doing things according to Christ, then we are walking in the day.

Notice I Thessalonians 5 where Paul is talking about the Day of the Lord,

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I Thessalonians 5:5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

I Thessalonians 5:8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

Now, faith, hope, and love are the three cardinal virtues. This is repeated in I Corinthians 13:13. And, love is the greatest of them.

What Paul is saying is that if we use and develop these three character traits of God, then we will have what it takes to produce godly forethought, because we are like Christ, we are of the day. Faith is the belief and trust in God to act just as He says He will. Love is keeping God's commandments, doing what is good and right. Hope is the expectation of ultimate good because of His promises.

When we make these our spiritual foundation—belief and trust in God; keeping God's commandments; and expecting His promises to be fulfilled—we are bound to be in tune with God! We would then be in synch with His desires and goals. We will be functioning with the mind of Christ, because that is the way that He functions. He functioned in faith, love, and hope. This makes our ability to foresee outcomes of our words and actions far more accurately than the average human being has, because they are not functioning out of faith—knowing what God says, and believing it; and love—doing whatever good we can within our ability; and hope—knowing that God is going to fulfill what He has said He is going to fulfill.

So, we need to take care—we really need to consider thoughtfully how we speak to one another; how we act with each other. This is so that we live in harmony with each other and do not put stumbling blocks in the way of our spiritual progress.

And, parents, start teaching your children to think ahead, to think things through, to take a moment and consider their actions and not just to fly off and do whatever they think they should do. Give them exercises if you can, coming up with ways to make them go through a process of figuring out how things work out if they do a certain thing. If they want to buy something, having the money in their hands, make them think about it, and ask themselves if they really need this. Is it something that is really going to help them, or is it just a frivolous expense? You are teaching them to take what they have, with knowledge, and come up with good reason why they should or should not do a certain thing. This develops a habit in them that they can later use spiritually to make some of

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these more difficult decisions.

So, be careful to teach your children to think ahead.

Let us finish in Ezekiel 18. We were here at one point, but now we have done what is right:

Ezekiel 18:27-28 "Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezekiel 18:31-32 "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

This is what God wants to see in all of us. We have already turned from our former wickedness and taken on the burden of the life in Christ. He has given us a new heart and a new spirit. And so, we are at that point where we can take advantage of this time, and these gifts to consider our ways, and to make the changes that are necessary to be in the Kingdom of God.