With this background in mind let us briefly define what these terms mean in their context, and then we will be able to examine them in relation to one another in the context of Scripture.

**Foreknowledge (election)**
Now here we have what really is the **very first** and **foundational element** in **salvation**. It is God in eternity past **willing salvation to happen** for those whom He chooses. This of course we call **election**. This is not to be confused with God’s knowing of all things from eternity, although it is related to that, in the context of salvation, **foreknowledge is God’s deliberate setting of His electing love on those whom He chooses**, from eternity past. The Nelson’s Bible Dictionary makes this simple and clear.

**FOREKNOWLEDGE** - The unique knowledge of God which enables Him to know all events, including the free acts of man, before they happen.

God's foreknowledge is much more than foresight. God does not know future events and the actions of men because He foresees them; He knows them because He wills them to happen (Job 14:5; Ps 139:15-16). Thus God's foreknowledge is an act of His will (Isa 41:4; Rev 1:8,17; 21:6).

In Rom 8:29 and 11:2, the apostle Paul's use of the word foreknew means "to choose" or "to set special affection on." The electing love of God, not foresight of human action, is the basis of His predestination and salvation (Rom 8:29-30,33). This same idea is used to express the nation of Israel's special relationship to God (Acts 2:23; Rom 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20).

(From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Now see the distinction between God knowing things beforehand (prescience), and God’s **deliberately acting to choose** and **set special affection upon beforehand** (His willing and decreeing of them). This is clearly revealed in Scripture for example with the nation of Israel, whom God chose to be His special people, and also the Church whom Israel foreshadows in type. These are chosen to be God’s own people, a kingdom of priests unto God (1 Pet 2:9-10, Rev 1:6). To see this even more clearly, let us look at the passages where the word **foreknowledge** is used in the context of salvation.

**Romans 8:28-30** - 28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are **called according to His purpose**. 29 For **whom He foreknew, He also predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; 30 and **whom He predestined, these He also called**; and whom He called, these He also **justified**; and whom He justified, these **He also glorified**. NASB

See here how calling, predestination, justification, and glorification are all acts of God’s will, and consequences of His foreknowledge. But here God foreknows,
that is deliberately acts in His eternal counsel to bring about calling, predestination, justification, and glorification. God had a **purpose** in calling us (v-28), that is to save us (v-29-30). That salvation of us is called in this passage by **five** (foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification) **different logically ordered terms**, **given in a sequence**. Now all of these fall out in the sequence of time **beginning with foreknowledge** and **ending in glorification**. Here it is abundantly clear that foreknowledge is the first and foundational element, which brings about the others, ending in the consummation of His **purpose**, glorification with Him. This also is an obvious key from the knowledge of God, things happen not because God knows them, but because He wills them to happen, His decree. Therefore, all of these savings acts, are acts of God’s will beginning with the **willing itself** which is here called **foreknowledge**.

Let’s also consider Romans 11:1-4.

**Romans 11:1-4** - 11 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 **God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew**. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is the divine response to him? "I have **kept for Myself seven thousand** men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." NASB

Here again Paul speaks of God’s willing in His eternal counsel to know a people, that is to set His special electing love upon them. Consider how Deuteronomy makes God’s fore-loving, or foreknowledge of Israel crystal clear. Moreover, the consequences of His willing in His eternal counsel coming to pass in a real salvation in the course of history.

**Deuteronomy 4:32-40** - 32 "Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, **since the day that God created man on the earth**, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other. **Has anything been done like this great thing**, or has anything been heard like it? 33 "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? 34 "Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 "To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. 37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, 38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. 39 **Know therefore today, and take it to your heart**, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. NASB

**Deuteronomy 7:7-9** – 7 The Lord **did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples**, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 **but because the Lord loved you** and kept the oath which He swore to your
forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. NASB

See then, how this foreknowledge is much more than just “prescience”, (that’s is to know before), but an act of God’s will to deliberately love a specific people. This word foreknowledge is never used of the wicked and unbelieving in the Bible, it is reserved only for God’s special electing love that motivates the savings acts He performs for His own people. Consider also, 1 Peter 1:1-2;

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

See again hear, the Christians to whom Peter is writing are referred to as “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” The word “chosen” here is the Greek “eklektos,” simply meaning “elect” or “chosen.” They are the ones whom He is also “sanctifying” by the “work of the Spirit.” These are said to be chosen for “obedience” to Jesus Christ. In the context of our study, we should just note here that, election happens according to foreknowledge, a word we have briefly discussed in other passages in the New Testament meaning God’s willing beforehand to love, or to set His love upon. See then that foreknowledge is actually the first element in election, God’s willing before hand upon certain individuals that He then chooses, or if you will, His forewilling to love is His choosing, thus Peter’s remark, “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”

Now as we consider the order of salvation, let us say here that there is no part of it that comes before the eternal counsel of God, His eternal knowledge of whom He chooses to save. That is why we have stated that this is the very first and foundational element in salvation. It is God in eternity past willing salvation to happen for those whom He chooses. This of course we call election. See then it is always first in the ordo salutis.

Election
Now before moving on let us just briefly comment on the teaching of election to give a little more background in understanding this term, and some Scripture in context. Note here a few important things about election that are important elements in it. Bruce Demarest makes these helpful observations;

1) Election is according to God’s sovereign will and good pleasure. It involves God’s unconditional choice of a man or woman, the latter’s choice of God.
2) Election is an act of free grace. God is not obligated to save a single rebellious sinner.
3) Election is not based on foreseen faith, works or holiness. Although God knows all things in advance, foreknowledge is an act of God’s will to save