

6. PREDESTINATION

ROMANS 9:6-24, 11:33-36

1. INTRODUCING PREDESTINATION

(a) Basics

- Keywords: “predestination” and “election” = choosing
- Definition: “Before the foundation of the world God chose to save a fixed number of individuals. He chose them purely for his own glory, because of his loving mercy, and not because of their foreknown faith, good works, or perseverance.”

(b) Predestination and the sovereignty of God (e.g. Eph 1:11)

(c) Asking questions about predestination – intellectual and personal

(d) Predestination in church history: Calvinism vs. Arminianism

2. PREDESTINATION EXPLAINED

“This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by anything in those who are its subjects. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind, only condemnation; so it is a wonder, and matter for endless praise, that he should choose to save any of us; and doubly so when his choice involved the giving of his own Son to suffer as sin-bearer for the elect (Romans 8:32).” (J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, p149).

(a) Before the foundation of the world God chose

- Ephesians 1:3-5
- John 6:37-39
- Total inability requires that GOD must chose if any are to be saved

(b) God chose a fixed number of individuals

- No person is responsible for his/her own salvation
- Named individuals: e.g. Jacob, Esau, Pharaoh, the 7,000 (Romans 9,11) and those listed in the lamb's book of life (Rev 13:8, 20:11-15, 21:27; also see 6:11).

(c) God chose some for salvation

- "Those to whom God applies the blessings of salvation IN TIME, are those whom he has chosen BEFORE time."
- E.g. Romans 9:23, Eph 1:5
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth."
- Acts 13:48, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed."

(d) God purposes not to save others ("reprobation")

- Romans 9:22, "prepared for destruction."
- 1 Peter 2:8, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for."
- Proverbs 16:4, "The LORD works out everything for his own ends-- even the wicked for a day of disaster."
- Also John 6:64-65, 12:40, Romans 1:24, 11:7-8, Mark 4:12, Deut 2:30, Acts 2:23, 4:27-28, Luke 22:22.
- Not symmetrical (Isaiah 28:21, Exodus 34)

(e) God chose for his own glory (e.g. Eph. 1:5-6)

(f) God chose because of his loving mercy, not because of anything in us.

Calvinism = election → faith // Arminianism = foreseen faith → election

Election is unconditional:

Romans 9:15-16

Deut 7:7-8, 1 Cor 1:26-31

Eph 2:9, 2 Tim 1:9

Eph 1:4, election causes holiness, NOT vice versa

3. ANSWERING QUESTIONS

(a) How is it fair? (Romans 9:14-18)

(b) Don't we have free will? Doesn't predestination make us robots? (Jn 8:34, 44)

(c) What about those who appear to stop being Christians?

(d) Why does God chose A and not B? (Deut. 29:29)

4. APPLYING THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Group discussion:

Read through each of the texts listed below. In each case what is God's predestining work meant to "do" to us? (What is its application?)

Acts 18:9-10

Colossians 3:12

Romans 9:20

John 6:37

Ephesians 1:3

5. HOMEWORK

For reflection:

- Read, pray and worship in the light of some Bible texts we've looked at today.
- Read A.M. Toplady's hymn below and think about its words.

Recommended reading:

- R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*

Next session: irresistible grace and effectual calling

- Please read Romans 8:28-39

How vast the benefits divine

which we in Christ possess!
We are redeemed from sin and shame
and called to holiness.
Not for the works that we have done-
all these to him are owed;
but he of his electing love
salvation has bestowed.

To you alone, O Lord, is due
all glory and renown:
praise to ourselves we dare not take,
or rob you of your crown.
You were yourself our guarantor
in God's redemption plan;
in you his grace was given us
before the world began.

Safe in the arms of sovereign love
we ever shall remain;
not all the rage of earth or hell
can make your promise vain.
So none of all your chosen ones
shall fail your heaven to gain;
here they will share abounding grace,
and there with Jesus reign.