

# **GOD'S CHOSEN, MAN'S CHOICE**

## ***How Predestination and Free Will Work Together***

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### **I. INTRODUCTION.**

#### **A. How Does Predestination Fit in With God's Nature?**

1. How can God know and decree something ahead of time and it still be just and fair to all?

#### **B. How Does God's Predestination and Man's Free Will Go Together?**

1. What is the relationship between God's sovereign foreknowledge and control and man's free will? Is God in control of man's free will? How can God be in control of all things if man has a free will and how can man exercise his free will if God is in control of all things?

#### **C. Monergism or Synergism?**

1. Does God work alone (monergism, Calvinism), or does God work with mankind (synergism)?
2. The Bible teaches that God and mankind work together: Acts 2:37-42; and Phil. 2:12-13.

### **II. PREDESTINATION, FREE WILL, AND THE NATURE OF GOD.**

#### **A. God's sovereignty.**

1. God is omnipotent; Lord and Ruler over all (all powerful). He is in control of all things (Isa. 46:10).
2. God chose to create a world where mankind would have a free will and a power to choose from the very beginning (Gen. 1-3). God also chose the conditions that mankind could choose to be saved. God's sovereignty is consistent with conditional election.

#### **B. God's foreknowledge.**

1. God is omniscient (all-knowing). He knows all things even before they happen. God's knowledge is infinite and is not limited (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 90:2; Isa. 46:9-10).
2. God knows ahead of time who will be saved and who will be lost, but He does not unconditionally save some and damn others. God knows ahead of time who will meet his conditions for salvation and who will not. If God cannot see the future without forcing every move of every person, he is not omniscient! God's foreknowledge is consistent with conditional election.

#### **C. God's grace.**

1. God's grace (unmerited favor) saves mankind by offering a free gift of salvation.
2. God's free gift must be received by complying with his conditions; not conditioned upon works of merit, but upon obedient faith (Eph. 2:8-9). God's grace is consistent with conditional election.

D. God's justice.

1. God is just and fair in his judgment. He treats everyone alike and without respect of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).
2. God's justice allows man to choose for himself whether or not he will meet the conditions to be saved or lost. God's justice is consistent with conditional election.

### III. GOD'S CHOSEN, MAN'S CHOICE.

A. Romans 9 Is Often Used by Calvinists to Teach Unconditional Election (see 9:16).

1. Paul is not teaching Calvinism, he is confronting Judaism (9:16 is not addressing conditional works, it is addressing the Jews lineage, 9:6-7) - Jews who want to be saved based upon their physical lineage and without faith in Jesus. He taught the need for all Jews and Gentiles to be saved by the gospel (Rom. 1-11; see 9:24). Mankind is saved in Christ, not by physical lineage alone (Rom. 2:25-29; 9:7).
2. Paul's main point in Rom. 9-11 is that God has acted justly and has not broken his word with Israel. Here is the main question: "Did God cast off his people" (11:1-2)?

B. What About Jacob and Esau?

1. Here are Paul's key points in answering this question:
  - a) First, God wants Israel to be saved (9:1-3; see 10:1; 11:14).
  - b) Second, God has blessed Israel greatly (9:4-5).
  - c) Third, God can choose whomever he wants for service in carrying out his plan: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Pharaoh (9:6-13).
    - (1) God chose to call Israel through Jacob and not Esau (9:13; Gen. 25:22-23; Mal. 1:2-3). Is this Calvinism? No. This election was the choosing of a nation (Mal. 1:2-5) to serve and bring about the Messiah (9:5), not the choosing of individuals to be eternally saved or lost.
      - (a) Note: We are not told that Esau was lost in sin, just like we are not told that Ishmael was lost in sin.
      - (b) Israel was chosen for *service*, not for *salvation*. They all were elected for *service*, but some of them were rejected for *salvation*. Read this text carefully!

- (2) Note that Rom. 9:15 is a quotation of Ex. 33:19. Look at the context of this passage in Exodus 33. It is not teaching Calvinism. God is responding to Moses' request for God to show his presence and glory (Ex. 33:12-23).
  - (3) Note that Rom. 9:17 is a quotation of Ex. 9:16. Note the words "For this very purpose..." God has a purpose or plan to accomplish. The matter of Pharaoh will be covered below.
  - (4) Note the hardening in 9:18. The hardening of Pharaoh (9:17-18) led to the Israelites be delivered from bondage, just as the hardening of Israel led to the Gentiles being delivered from sin (11:7, 25).
  - (5) The Jews had accepted God's choice regarding Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Pharaoh. Paul wants them to accept God's choice of both Jews and Gentiles being saved in the same way through Jesus Christ (9:19-20).
- d) Fourth, God, like a potter, has a plan to save a particular people – vessels of honor (9:19-21). Who?
- (1) Jews and Gentiles (9:22-26).
  - (2) A remnant among the Jews (9:27-29; comp. 9:6; 11:4-5).
- e) Fifth, God saves a person based upon their "righteousness of faith", not upon their "law of righteousness" (9:30-32; see also "faith" in 10:6, 8; 11:20).
2. Note: Many Calvinists want to use Romans 9-11 to teach unconditional election and reprobation. However, these chapters teach several things that are contrary to Calvinism:
- a) a desire for all to be saved (9:3; 10:1; 11:32)
  - b) conditional salvation (9:33; 10:3,9-11,13,21)
  - c) the invitation to salvation is for all (10:11-13, 18)
  - d) belief through preaching (10:8, 17)
  - e) the elect (Jews) being disobedient (9:32-33; 10:3, 16, 21; 11:7, 20)
  - f) the elect (Jews) can fall from grace, be cut off, and then grafted back in (11:15, 20-24,28,31)
  - g) there are conditions - "if" – to remaining saved; otherwise, you will be lost (11:22-23)
  - h) Paul's attempt to save the lost (11:7-14).
3. Also, if Romans 9-11 teaches unconditional election, what about Romans 1:5, 16; 2:4-11; 4:12; 5:2; 6:3-5, 17; and 16:26?
- C. What About Pharaoh?

1. Rom. 9:14-18.
2. Does Romans 9:14-18 teach Calvinism? No. Paul's point in Romans 9:14-18 is that Pharaoh was chosen to serve the purpose of God and show God's power, not that he lacked free will.
3. What about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?
  - a) THERE ARE VERSES THAT SAY GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART, BUT THOSE VERSES MAY NOT SAY HOW GOD DID IT. ONE MUST READ THE REST OF THE CONTEXT TO DETERMINE HOW GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART. READ ALL OF EXODUS 4-14 TO SEE HOW GOD DID IT, NOT JUST ONE VERSE.
  - b) There are 20 verses that mention hardening – 19 for Pharaoh and 1 for the Egyptians: 4:21; 7:3, 13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 13:15; 14:4, 8, 17.
  - c) There are three Heb. verbs that are used for hardening: *chazaq* = strong, strengthen (12 times - 4:21; 7:13, 22; 8:19; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; note "hold" in 9:2), *kabed* = heavy (6 times - 7:14; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34; 10:1; note "heavier" in 5:9 and "honored" in 14:4, 17, 18), and *qasha* = hard, difficult, stubborn (2 times - 7:3; 13:15).
  - d) There are 10 times when the subject of the hardening is God (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17) and there are 10 times when the subject of the hardening is Pharaoh (7:13-14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35; 13:15).
4. Consider the following facts...
  - a) God knew in advance that Pharaoh would harden his heart (3:19). Why? He has divine foreknowledge (Isa. 46:10; Psa. 139:4).
  - b) God determined in advance that he would harden Pharaoh's heart (4:21). Why? He has divine determined counsel (Acts 2:23). And, we are told that God hardened Pharaoh's heart at a later time (Ex. 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:1, 4, 8, 17). Did he do this directly and against Pharaoh's will? No.
  - c) We are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:34-35). This demonstrates that Pharaoh had a choice and a free will.
  - d) How do these two facts go together? God hardened Pharaoh's heart by giving him the circumstances to be hardened: God's words, God's demands, and God's miracles given through Moses (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 14:4, 17 [note the servants and other Egyptians are hardened also]), the time between one miracle and another, the comments of the magicians, etc. God placed Pharaoh and others in circumstances where they chose to be hardened. God provided the circumstances and thereby (indirectly) hardened Pharaoh's heart.

- (1) Note that circumstances are tied to hardening (9:34)
  - (2) Note that some Egyptians feared God and others did not; this shows free will (9:20-21).
  - (3) There was a purpose for all of the hardening – that the people would “know” that God is in control (7:3-5; 10:1-2; 14:4, 17-18).
- e) Pharaoh hardened his own heart when he chose not to obey God’s word (Ex. 8:15; 9:34). Pharaoh was not a victim of an arbitrary, capricious God! Pharaoh was responsible for his own sin – “I have sinned...” (9:27).
- f) Remember, the same word of God that hardened Pharaoh’s heart, softened the hearts of others including Moses and some of the Egyptians who went with Israel (Ex. 12:38). Illustration: The same sun that hardens clay, softens butter. Remember, God does not lead people to sin (Jas. 1:13), he is not a respecter of persons (Acts. 10:34-35), and he is not willing that any should perish (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- (1) Why would God ask what he did, if he hardened Pharaoh against his will (10:3)?
- g) Pharaoh was stubborn before it is said that God hardened his heart (Ex. 2:23; 3:9, 10; 5:2). Note the comment on this incident by the Philistines in 1 Sam. 6:6. Pharaoh was hardened just like Sihon King of Heshbon and others (Deut. 2:30; see also Josh. 11:20). God provides the circumstances for hardening to those who don’t want to obey God (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; 2 Thess. 2:10-11; 2 Cor. 4:4).
- h) Examine these other verses to see how God hardens hearts (2 K. 17:14; 2 Chron. 36:13; Neh. 9:16,17,29; Psa. 95:8; Isa. 6:9-10; Dan. 5:20; Mt. 13:14-16; Mk. 6:52; 8:17; Jn. 12:37-40; Acts 19:9; Rom. 11:7-8; 2 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 3:8,13,15; 4:7). God can also “open” a heart! But how? Through his word (Acts 16:14).

#### D. What About Judas?

1. Jn. 6:70-71; 13:21-26 and Acts 1:16-20, 25; 2:23.
2. God had already decreed that his Son would be betrayed (Acts 1:16). Is this Calvinism? No. God foreknew that Judas would make his own choice to betray Jesus. Judas did not betray Jesus because he was chosen to do so; rather, he was chosen because God foreknew he would betray Jesus. God *foreknew* that Judas would betray Jesus, but God did not *cause* Judas to fulfill his role as a betrayer.
3. Judas was evil before he betrayed Jesus (Jn. 6:70; 12:6). Satan entered Judas (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2, 27), when Judas let Satan in (Eph. 4:27).

#### E. What About the Jews Who Crucified Jesus?

1. Acts 2:23; 4:28.

2. God had already decreed that Jesus would be crucified. Is this Calvinism? No. The Jews acted by their own free will (Acts 2:36-37).

#### **IV. CONCLUSION.**

- A. There Are Two Possible Responses to the Revealed Will of God and the Sovereignty of God: Obedience (Open Hearts) or Disobedience (Hard Hearts).
- B. Are You Open-Hearted or Hard-Hearted (Heb. 3:13)?