

THE PREDESTINATION OF GOD

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I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Since the days of the Protestant Reformation (A.D. 1500's), no Bible doctrine has been more misunderstood and maligned than the doctrine of predestination.
- B. The questions answered in this lesson.
 - 1. What is predestination?
 - 2. What is the predestination issue?
 - 3. How does God's predestination work?

II. WHAT IS PREDESTINATION?

- A. Predestination Defined.
 - 1. Predestination, (Greek, *proorizo*), means to "to mark out; ordain; determine before hand; predetermine; foreordain" (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11).
 - 2. Chose, chosen (Greek, *eklegomai*), means to "elect, choose, select" (Mk. 13:20; Lk. 6:13; 10:42; 14:7; Jn. 6:70; 13:18; 15:16 (twice), 19; Acts 1:2,24; 6:5; 13:17; 15:7,22,25; 1 Cor. 1:27 (twice), 28; Eph. 1:4; Jas. 2:5); see also 2 Thess. 2:13 (Greek, *haireomai*, chose).
 - 3. Elect (Greek, *eklektos*, Mt. 20:16; 22:14; 24:22,24,31; Mk. 13:20,22,27; Lk. 18:7; 23:35; Rom. 8:33; 16:13; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:10; Tit. 1:1; 1 Per. 1:2; 2:4,6,9; 2 Jn. 1,13; Rev. 17:14).
 - 4. Election (Greek, *eklogee*, Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Pet. 2:10).
 - 5. Foreknow, means to "know or ordain beforehand" (Greek, *proginosko*, Acts 26:5; Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:17; Greek, *prognosis*, Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2).
- B. God ordains, chooses, elects, and knows certain things before they come to pass. This issue is: How does God predestine things? Or, what is the basis of God's predestination?

III. WHAT IS THE PREDESTINATION ISSUE?

- A. John Calvin's Predestination.
 - 1. John Calvin (A.D. 1509 – 1564), taught that the choice of man to be saved or lost was determined by God's sovereign will alone, by God's free grace and greatness; not conditioned in any way on man's free will. Calvin's understanding of God's sovereignty led him to believe that

God's sovereignty (might, power, control) completely eliminates man's free will to choose. Salvation and damnation are thereby unconditional.

2. John Calvin wrote: "For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for other" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 3, Chapter 21, Section 5) ... "As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction" (Section 7).
3. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, adopted by the Presbyterian Church, reads: "By the decree of God ... some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death (Chapter 3, Section 3).
4. *The Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, adopted by the Baptist Church reads similarly (Section 3, Number 4).

B. Calvinism Today.

1. The major denominations that came out of the Protestant Reformation followed some form of Calvinism (Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, etc.). Today, many of the mainline denominations are Calvinistic in their theology. Many commentaries are written by denominationalists who are influenced by Calvinism.
2. Some members of churches of Christ have accepted portions of Calvinism (see *Neo-Calvinism in the Church of Christ*, Tom Roberts, Editor, Cogdill Foundation, 1980).

C. The Issue: Is Predestination to Salvation and Damnation Conditional or Unconditional?

1. Calvin taught unconditional predestination.
2. The Bible teaches conditional predestination.

IV. HOW DOES GOD'S PREDESTINATION WORK?

A. The Goal of Predestination.

1. Predestination to Service.
 - a) Provide the Plan - the election of Jesus to serve as the Savior of mankind (Isa. 42:1; Mt. 12:18; Lk. 9:35; 1 Pet. 2:4-6). Jesus was predestined to die for the sins of the world (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 2:20).
 - b) Prepare the Plan - the election of Israel to serve as a nation to bring about the Messiah (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 1 Chron. 16:13; Acts 13:17, 32-33; Rom. 9:4-5). Two points are important here: Israel was chosen for service, not salvation; and, Israel was chosen as a nation (a group), not as individuals.

- c) Participate in the Plan - the election of individual servants, both good and bad, who would be a part of the purposes of God: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Neh. 9:7; Rom. 9:7,13), Moses (Psa. 106:23, Aaron (Psa. 105:26), Saul (1 Sam. 10:24), David (Psa. 78:70; 139:16), Gentile rulers like Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17) or Cyrus (Isa. 45:1), the Twelve Apostles (Lk. 6:13; Jn. 7:70; 13:18; 15:16,19), Paul (Gal. 1:15-16), Judas (Jn. 6:70-71), etc.
- d) Placed into the Plan - election is conditioned upon being “in Christ” (Eph. 1:4) and whatever conditions one must meet in order to get “in Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 3:17; Col. 2:12). “In Christ” is the place where salvation is found. “In Christ” is found 88 times in the NT! God predestined (chose beforehand) the place (realm) in which anyone could be saved – in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:28-30, note “love” in v. 28; Eph. 1:3-14, note “in him” used many times). God foresaw the place, the realm, or the relationship of salvation – the “in Christ” church (Eph. 3:9-10).
- e) Propagate or Proclaim the Plan - the election of the church to serve as the proclaimer of the gospel plan of salvation by living it and preaching it to others (1 Pet. 2:9).
- f) Election (predestination) of a nation or individuals for service does not mean that they were chosen individually for salvation or for condemnation.

2. Predestination to Salvation.

- a) Election to salvation is individual and personal (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1-2).
- b) Election to salvation is conditioned upon obedience to the gospel (see more below).

B. The Basis of Predestination.

1. The Calvinist view: the unconditional election of individuals to salvation.

- a) According to Calvinism, God chose who would be saved and who would be lost (for reasons known only to God). Thus, election is totally unconditional. There are no conditions which a person must meet in order to be saved or lost. God unconditionally selects sinners to be saved or to remain lost (reprobation).
- b) Objections to unconditional election and reprobation.
 - (1) Makes God a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:19; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).
 - (2) Makes God responsible for the damnation of the wicked; thus, bringing reproach upon God’s character (Ezek. 18:21-32; 33:10-20). According to Calvinism, how can God ordain a man to do evil,

tell him that evil is wrong in the Bible, and finally punish him for doing evil?

- (3) Denies that God wants all men to be saved (Ezek. 18:23; 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4; Tit. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- (4) Rejects the free will choice of man (Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15).
- (5) Makes true accountability to God impossible (Eccl. 12:14; Mt. 25:19; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:12-13).
- (6) Makes the universal gospel invitation unnecessary (Mt. 11:28-30; 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Rev. 22:17).
- (7) Makes the universal call to repentance useless (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9).
- (8) Makes man's salvation and damnation unconditional (Lk. 13:3, 5; Jn. 3:3-5; 8:24).
- (9) Makes obedience unnecessary (Mt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).
- (10) Makes the work of Satan unnecessary and ineffective (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

2. The Biblical view: the conditional election of individuals to salvation.

- a) Salvation will be given to anyone who meets the conditions of salvation laid down by God. Many "if" statements in the Bible show salvation to be conditional (Jer. 18:7-10; Ezek. 18:21-24; note also the "except" statements, Jn. 8:24; Lk. 13:3, 5).
- b) Election (God's part) and conditions (faithful obedience, man's part) go together (1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9-10; and 1:22-23; 3:21; 2 Pet. 1:10); (1 Thess. 1:4 and 1 Thess. 1:9; 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:13); see also Rev. 17:14.

V. CONCLUSION.

A. Predestination Should Give Us A Sense of Personal Responsibility.

1. We have a responsibility to obey the gospel call (Acts 2:37, 40).
2. We have a responsibility to keep living right (Phil. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:10).

B. Predestination Should Give Us A Sense of Personal Relief.

1. According to Calvinism, no one can really know whether or not he is saved until the judgment day.
2. Conditional election is a source of personal relief because God tells us in the Bible what he expects of us. There is no mystery! We know right now what the conditions of salvation are and whether or not we have met these conditions (Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:3-5; 3:14, 19, 24; 5:13, 18-20). We can sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine..."