

SOTERIOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

PART 39

KEY TERMS: PREDESTINATION, PART 3

In light of this discussion on predestination, we would be remiss not to acknowledge a related issue that many would rather not discuss and that is the doctrine of double predestination. This doctrine means that if God has actually chosen, in eternity past, specific people who will be saved and granted eternal life, then He also chose, in eternity past, those who would be condemned to eternal death. A significant number of theologians who hold to the doctrine of predestination as the foundational doctrine of their understanding of the sovereignty of God, also believe in double predestination. Many others do not hold the doctrine of double predestination and they try to downplay the obvious consequences of that doctrine by making the claim that God chooses some people out of the universe of the lost and simply passes by the others which allows them to justly reap the end destined for them, and deserved by them, due to their fallen nature.

One Reformed dictionary says “Double predestination is the typical Reformed doctrine....Predestination thus includes election and reprobation, and reprobation involves both a sovereign passing by (preterition) and a just condemnation....Election (as well as reprobation) is individual, personal, specific, particular” [F. H. Klooster, in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s. v. “Elect, Election”]. In contrast to this definition and as a reminder of the irrational inconsistency between theologians in this system, Grudem makes the claim that “the term *double predestination* is not generally used by Reformed theologians” because he thinks it equates one with the other selection to salvation and election to reprobation and he does not believe the people in both categories are chosen in the same way [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 670]. Well, which is it? My position is it is neither. God was not and is not in the business of specifically determining in eternity past who would be granted eternal life and he was not and is not in the business of specifically deciding who will spend eternity in the state of eternal death consigned to the lake of fire.

Augustine seems to be the earliest theologian to develop the doctrine of double predestination in conjunction with predestination. He had a “fatalistic view of predestination” meaning that God has decided everything in advance and man has no option to believe or not [David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, p. 83]. Calvin frequently referred to Augustine's theology and he often approvingly quoted him. Augustine wrote, “...the supremely Good [God] thus turning to good account even what is evil, to the condemnation of those whom in His justice He has predestined to

punishment, and to the salvation of those whom in His mercy He has predestined to grace" [*Enchiridion* 100]. "That owing to one man all pass into condemnation who are born of Adam, unless they are born again in Christ, even as he has appointed them to be regenerated, before they die in the body, whom He predestinated to everlasting life, as the most merciful bestower of grace; while to those whom He has predestined to eternal death, He is also the most righteous awarder of punishment..." [*On the Soul*, IF.16] [both Augustine quotes as quoted in David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, p. 84]. When Augustine refers to God as the "Good," he is reverting back to his pagan, Manichean roots which were gnostic and which considered the immaterial and spiritual to be good and the material to be evil. The Manichean cult was a cult of knowledge heavily influenced by Greek philosophy and eastern religions. The emphasis was on light vs. darkness and good vs. evil. It is much more complicated than that, but for our purposes in understanding Soteriology, this will suffice. It is apparent that Augustine never completely divested himself of his pagan roots in the same way that much later Luther and Calvin could never completely divest themselves from Augustinian theology and Roman Catholic theology during the Reformation. This allusion to Gnosticism ought to be a warning flag for any theologian using Augustine's work.

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin presented the views on double predestination he received from Augustine. In Book III Chapter XXI, Calvin's chapter heading reads "Eternal Election, by Which God has Predestined Some to Salvation, Others to Destruction." "If it is plain that it comes to pass by God's bidding that salvation is freely offered to some while others are barred from access to it...out of the common multitude of men some should be predestined to salvation, others to destruction" [Book III, Chapter XXI, Paragraph 1]. "We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death" [Book III, Chapter XXI, Paragraph 5]. "...[Many] accept election in such terms as to deny that anyone is condemned. But they do this very ignorantly and childishly, since election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation...those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children....This plainly means [referring to the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares] that all those whom the Heavenly Father has not deigned to plant as sacred trees in his field are marked and intended for destruction. If they say this is no sign of reprobation, there is nothing so clear that it can be proved to them" [Book III, Chapter XXIII, Paragraph 1]. Interestingly, Calvin called the doctrine of double predestination a "horrible decree" [Book III, Chapter XXIII, Paragraph 7]. He recognized the awful nature of the doctrine of double predestination. "What of those then, [the

reprobate] whom he created for dishonor in life and destruction in death, to become the instruments of his wrath and examples of his severity? That they may come to their end, he sometimes deprives them of the capacity to hear his word; at other times he, rather, blinds and stuns them by the preaching of it" [Book III, Chapter XXIV, Paragraph 12].

R. C. Sproul. "Predestination is double. The only way to avoid the doctrine of double predestination is to either affirm that God predestinates everybody to election or that He predestinates no one to either election or reprobation. Since the Bible clearly teaches predestination to election and denies universal salvation, we must conclude that predestination is double. It includes both election and reprobation. Double predestination is unavoidable if we take Scripture seriously" [R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, p. 165]. Sproul attempts to soften the doctrine by claiming that God positively elects the saved but simply passes over those who are to remain unsaved. "Some of fallen humanity receive the grace and mercy of election. The rest God passes over, leaving them in their sin. The nonelect receive justice. The elect receive mercy. No one receives injustice" [R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, p. 162]. This is a common attempt to explain away the unpleasant ramifications of predestination. Dr. Anderson refers to this explanation as "asymmetrical" [David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, p. 83]; Sproul calls it the positive-negative scheme of predestination.

The Calvinist church historian of the nineteenth century, Philip Schaff, believed that predestination was absolute and double. "Calvinism...starts from a double decree of absolute predestination, which antedates creation, and is the divine program of human history. This program includes the successive stages of the creation of man, a partial redemption and salvation, and a partial reprobation and perdition: all for the glory of God and the display of his attributes of mercy and justice. History is only the execution of the original design. There can be no failure. The beginning and the end, God's immutable plan and the issue of the world's history, must correspond" [Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 8:568].

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646 in Chapter III, Paragraph III says, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death" [http://www.Reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/ accessed 23 July 2015].

John Piper. "...double predestination, is simply the flip side of unconditional election. Just as God chooses whom He will save without regard to any distinctives in the person (Ephesians 1:5-6; Acts 13:48; Revelation 17:8), so also he decides whom He will not save without regard to any distinctives in the individual (John 10:26; 12:37-40; Romans 9:11-18;

1 Peter 2:7-8). By definition, the decision to elect some individuals to salvation necessarily implies the decision not to save those that were not chosen. God ordains not only that some will be rescued from his judgment, but that others will undergo that judgment...." [accessed at on 22 July 2015: <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-piper-mean-when-he-says-hes-a-seven-point-calvinist>].

W. R. Godfrey, a professor at Westminster Seminary in California refers to Augustine's theology when he wrote: "The reason some sinners are saved and others lost must be in God. It is according to God's sovereign purpose. His eternal decree that some sinners are rescued and others are left in their sin. The foundation of this divine decree is simply the good pleasure of God" [W. R. Godfrey, "Predestination" in *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 528 as quoted in George Bryson, *The Dark Side of Calvinism: The Calvinist Caste System*, p. 63].

Those who support the doctrine of predestination but want to deny double predestination use two methods to do so. One method is theological. They rely on their doctrine of a Divine Decree and they use the non-existent covenant of redemption as the basis for God electing some and not others.

"The doctrine of election [election is considered to be essentially synonymous with predestination] declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any)—but He did neither. Instead, He chose to save some and to exclude others [notice that even when they are trying to deny double predestination they fail because it is inherently part of the doctrine of predestination as they understand it]....The doctrine of election should not only be viewed against the backdrop of human depravity and guilt, but should also be studied in connection with the eternal covenant or agreement made between members of the Godhead [this is referring to the so-called covenant of redemption]. For it was in the execution of this covenant that the Father chose out of the world of lost sinners a definite number of individuals and gave them to the Son to be His people. The Son, under the terms of this compact agreed to do all that was necessary to save those 'chosen' and 'given' to Him by the Father. The Spirit's part in the execution of this covenant was to apply to the elect the salvation secured for them by the Son....All Calvinists agree that Christ's obedience and suffering were of infinite value, and that if God so willed, the satisfaction rendered by Christ would have saved every member of the human race. It would have required no more obedience, nor any greater suffering, for Christ to have secured salvation for every man, woman, and child who ever lived than it did for Him to secure salvation for the elect only. But He came

into the world to represent and save only those given to Him by the Father. Thus, Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value, for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God's intention" [David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*, pp. 27, 28, 40]. All of this theology is built on the concept of a non-existent covenant of redemption. You will search the Bible in vain for these stipulations to be specifically identified as part of a biblically revealed covenant.

They claim Christ died only for the elect, that is, those given Him by the Father. But who were those given to Christ? He was given all who would believe. This does not mean that God first chose in eternity past those and only those who would be given to Christ.

For some reason, these men think they are protecting God's sovereignty and reputation through this theology. They believe that if Christ shed His blood on the cross for the unsaved, which they deny He did, then His sacrifice is ineffective because it only takes away the sins of the elect and brings only those elect people full forgiveness; therefore, Jesus could not have died for all people and their sin because not all people are saved [see, for an example of this theology, John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, pp. 904-907 in a section entitled "For Whom Did Christ Die?"]. Further, an addendum to this argument is that if Christ died on the cross for all men, then all men must be saved or Christ failed and that is impossible. "If Christ's death was intended to save all men, then we must say that God was either unable or unwilling to carry out His plans. But since the work of God is always efficient, those for whom atonement was made and those who are actually saved must be the same people....Since the work of God is never in vain, those who are chosen by the Father, those who are redeemed by the Son, and those who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit...must include the same persons...Universal redemption means universal salvation" [which, of course, Boettner denies. This is a straw man argument; no one is arguing for universal redemption when we say Christ died for the sin of the world.] [Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 155-156]. This theology is predicated on the mistaken doctrine that the unsaved man cannot respond to God's light and believe; they maintain that God must regenerate the spiritually dead person and make him alive in order for him to believe and only the elect are regenerated. But Scriptures such as 1 John 2:2 tell us that Christ was the propitiation for the sins of not only Christians but the sins of the whole world. The fact that people reject the provision offered does not reflect on the God who made redemption possible; it reflects wholly on the one who rejects the offer.

1 John 2:2 ²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

The second method used to deny double predestination is to relegate the outworking of these doctrines to the secret counsel of God or to mystery or to paradox.

“...people are wholly to blame for their own damnation, while God is wholly credited with saving us. God does not foreordain that some go to hell in the same way he foreordains that some will be saved. This might sound illogical, but it is, I believe, biblical and a great mystery we cannot truly fathom” [Adrian Warnock, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/adrianwarnock/2007108/credit-god-blame-man-or-why-double> accessed 23 July 2015].

Mystery, as this man is using it, does not refer to the biblical definition of mystery as we understand it which refers to something hidden in the past but is now revealed. Mystery as defined by these theologians means something else. It refers to “God’s eternal purposes of redemption [which] were hidden until the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit, who reveals this mystery to the church” [*The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s. v. “mystery”]. This dictionary incorrectly used Ephesians as the basis for defining mystery as strictly a redemption issue. The definition of “mystery” has apparently been changed in order to meet the needs of this theological system.

The Westminster Confession also relegates the doctrines of predestination and election to the category of “mystery.” “The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election” (Westminster Confession, Chapter III, Paragraph VIII).

The Puritan William Perkins had a novel approach to explaining predestination and reprobation. He declared “there are two types of reprobates: those who are not called and those who are called, but not effectually. Those with no calling proceed from ‘ignorance and vanity of mind’ to ‘heart hardening’ to ‘a reprobate sense’ to ‘greediness of sin’ to ‘fullness of sin.’ Those who are called may go as far as yielding to God’s calling—which may include ‘a general illumination, penitence, temporary faith, a taste, [and] zeal’—before they ‘relapse’ into sin by means of ‘the deceit of sin, the hardening of the heart, an evil heart, an unbelieving heart, [and] apostasy.’ Ultimately, also the ineffectually called are led to ‘fullness of sin,’ so that the two streams of reprobates become one prior to death. For the reprobate, all calls remain ineffectual because all fail to bring them to Christ. Taken captive by their own sins, of which the greatest sin is ‘an unbelieving heart,’ the reprobate make themselves ripe for divine judgment and damnation” [William Perkins, *Golden Chaine in Works* quoted in Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, pp. 128-129].

There is no basis in the Bible that supports any of this Puritan theology; Perkins did not cite a single Scripture in support of his assertions. Does the Bible identify two types of reprobates? No, it doesn't. What's the point of making up two types of reprobates if they all end up in the same place, unsaved and condemned? Aren't all people born with the fullness of sin that separates them from God? Yes, they are. In terms of being spiritually dead, there is no progression of sin "from ignorance and vanity of mind" to the "fullness of sins." People are born with the full measure of spiritual death because they are born with a sin nature. How can a person have a "temporary faith" that does not result in the new birth and in eternal life? That's simply impossible; a person either places their faith in Christ or they don't. There is no such thing as "temporary faith." Perkins cannot use these subjective observations of a person's faith or lack thereof to build his Puritan doctrine of calling. People either believe at some point or they do not. This is all theological nonsense and it flows from an unbiblical understanding of what is called predestination.

It appears to me the reason for identifying two types of reprobates is to account for those this system identifies as "professing" believers but who are not "possessing" believers. In other words, Perkins seems to have been trying to account for those who appear to be real Christians but are nonetheless not elect and are therefore damned, and it also accounts for those who appear to be believers but fall away from the faith and fail to persevere. That is just my opinion concerning what Perkins is trying to accomplish with this doctrine, but this system has to account for those who fail to persevere but otherwise by all appearances and personal pronouncements appear to be Christians. Trying to determine who is a believer and who is not a believer based on behavior and appearances is a serious, negative consequence of their doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. They are always trying to determine who is a believer and who is merely a professing believer, hence, the Christian fruit inspection industry.

The reality is, predestination as defined in this system and the supporting theology is illogical and we have a God who is the author of logic and we have a Bible that is logical and theologically consistent from beginning to end. If something appears to be illogical, it is illogical and the problem doesn't go away simply by proclaiming it to be a mystery or something hidden in the secret counsel of God. I'm not saying we know everything; far from it. But I am saying that what God wants us to know, He has not made understanding impossible. Some of it may be difficult but it is not illogical and we just can't make up illogical doctrine and then say the meaning is hidden in the secret counsel of God.

Calvinists are very fond of retreating to Deuteronomy 29:29 in order to reconcile their doctrine of predestination with that which cannot be reconciled with the Bible. You will see them resort to the use of this verse over and over in their theology texts and

commentaries. Calvin used it [*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter XXI, Paragraph 3 entitled, "The second danger: anxious silence about the doctrine of election"]].

Deuteronomy 29:29 ²⁹"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

In his attempt to "prove" the existence of the covenant of redemption one Reformed theologian wrote, "Although we know precious few details about the secret counsel of God of which we are speaking here (see Deut 29:29), we can say that it exists and that the historical new covenant 'assures' and 'is founded upon' the *pactum salutis* [covenant of redemption]" [S. M. Baugh, "Galatians 3:20 and the Covenant of Redemption" in *Westminster Theological Journal*, 66, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 67]. Since the covenant of redemption does not exist and cannot be proven by use of the biblical text, its existence is said to rely on the secret counsel of God and that must be accepted as fact in order to maintain the theological system. There are so many logical fallacies with this argument that disqualify it for any serious consideration. It is a faulty appeal to authority because the system says the covenant of redemption exists and we have no right to question that assertion. It is an obvious assumption not based on revelation. Appealing to the secret counsel of God in order to confirm a doctrine that is not revealed is the logical fallacy of proof by lack of evidence. Everyone in the system believes this doctrine because everyone in the system believes this doctrine which is the logical fallacy of bandwagon. It is also repetition; if the covenant of redemption is taught often enough long enough, people get worn down into accepting its existence. The point is, any doctrine can be made up and presented as fact if the proof of it is consigned to the unknowable secret counsel of God. The lesson I want to impart in this is to encourage you to be in the Bible well enough to discern truth from error, to rely on the Bible as the only guide to your doctrinal beliefs, and to be a person who diligently checks the Scriptures to determine the veracity of any teacher.

"In neither Calvin's writings nor the Reformed confessions does predestination occupy a central place, and especially on this topic warnings abound against speculation (Dt 29:29)...We must not try to figure out God's secret providence, but must attend to the means he has provided for our salvation..." [Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, p. 315, 363].

Certainly, we acknowledge there is much about God and about His plan for history that remains unknown but the plan of salvation is not one of them; it is quite specifically taught in Scripture. To continually retreat to Deuteronomy 29:29 in order to avoid the logical and Scriptural inconsistencies in the doctrine of predestination is not only an

exercise in ducking the issue altogether, it is an exercise in subterfuge and theological deceit. If it can't be explained from the Scriptures, it is probably not worth presenting as truth. The bottom line is it is difficult to read any Calvinistic work on the doctrine of predestination without a reference to Deuteronomy 29:29 made in it someplace.

We also need to question whether or not this is even an appropriate use of Deuteronomy 29:29 at all and an examination of the context reveals that it is not a proper exegetical conclusion to draw from the pen of Moses. In the context of Deuteronomy chapters 28-30, God has promised blessings or obedience and curses for disobedience. In Deuteronomy 29, He is warning them of the judgment that would befall them as an example to others if they followed other gods. They were not to wonder about the things that would happen; they were to be about engaging in obedience to their covenant responsibilities. The things God had not revealed to them belonged to God and they were not to chase after information that had not been revealed to them. There is nothing in these Scriptures that is relevant to the doctrine of predestination or election or to any theologically constructed covenant such as the covenant of redemption. The only covenants in view here are obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and a covenant of promise to finally restore the Israelites to the land after "all these things have come upon you" (Dt. 30:1) which we commonly refer to as the Land Covenant.

There is an application in this verse for believers in this dispensation. We are to conduct our lives in accordance with the Scriptures and we are not to engage in trying to figure out things God has not addressed. This is one of the great errors of the modern emphasis on the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit and of the mysticism so many Christians are seeking after today. However, the unrevealed knowledge of God is certainly not meant to be a refuge for unbiblical doctrine that cannot be explained by the Scriptures and that is what these theologians are attempting to do when their system contradicts itself. For example, you cannot biblically retreat to Deuteronomy 29:29 to explain a covenant of redemption the Bible never identifies in the first place.

A particularly major problem within the predominant theological understanding of predestination is related to the fact that unique biblical circumstances in individual pericopes are applied to all situations throughout history. When this is done with the meaning of a word, it is called an illegitimate totality transfer [see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, p. 53]. For example, those who assume the words "save," "saved," or "salvation" always refer to justification salvation are committing an illegitimate totality transfer; those words can also have a temporal meaning to be physically saved and they may also refer to the other two tenses of salvation, sanctification and glorification. It is the same concept in view when done with a pericope or with some part of it [see also Carson, pp. 128-129 where he notes the fallacy of "reading one's personal theology into the text"]. Isn't that exactly what has happened in connection

with the doctrine of predestination? For example, we have noted that some theologians (Hodge and Warfield) view God's predetermined plan for the cross as recorded in Acts 2 to identify a predetermined plan that is normative for all people for all time and from that they validate the doctrine of predestination. That's not an appropriate exegetical presupposition or conclusion; it may be, but we have to take context, the analogy of Scripture and literal hermeneutics into consideration before we can make broad applications to specific circumstances identified in the Scriptures. In the case of the predestination of Christ's work on the cross, it is obviously not valid to use that as a presupposition for an all-encompassing decree of predestination. That plan was predetermined for Christ alone to accomplish a specific one time goal that is finished and cannot be repeated and it cannot be used to claim predestination for all events involving all people for all time.

Predestination then is best understood as God's previous appointment of those who are in Christ to future spiritual blessings. Believers are previously appointed to be adopted into the family of God as heirs and to receive an inheritance and they are to be conformed to the likeness of Christ culminating in their glorification. Conversely, the word does not mean that every detail of history has been decreed by God in eternity past before time and history began, and it does not mean that God specifically determined who was going to be a believer to the exclusion of all other people whether that is understood to be double predestination or not. We can conclude that if the doctrines of predestination and election as taught in this system of theology are correct, then double predestination is a necessary corollary to them. If they are not correct, and they are not, then double predestination is completely false; God did not choose in eternity past who would be saved and who would be lost and condemned to the lake of fire with absolutely no chance of coming to faith in Christ Jesus. That is a horrible injustice to attribute to the God of the Bible who is loving, merciful, and righteous. Calvin, while propagating and supporting the doctrine, called it exactly that—a horrible decree. "Again I ask: whence does it happen that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God?...The decree is dreadful indeed [*decretum quidem horribile fateor*], I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree" [John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, Chapter XXIII, Paragraph 7].