

Subject: *God's Work in Salvation: Predestination*

Scripture: *Romans 8:28-30*

Paul is writing here about God's plan of salvation and he is looking at it from God's point of view, from the eternal perspective. There are five links in this golden chain of redemption and it's important to see them in their logical and chronological order. The first two take place in eternity past. The next two take place in our lifetime. The final one will take place when Christ comes back for us either by way of the rapture or by way of the resurrection.

- 1) God's people are *foreknown*
- 2) God's people are *predestined*
- 3) God's people are *called*
- 4) God's people are *justified*
- 5) God's people are *glorified*

God is author of all five things. He is the initiator and completer. All five are certain and therefore are spoken of in the past tense. All five are true of all true Christians.

All five things are based on God's sovereignty. He is in control.

All five things are based on God's wisdom. He always knows what is best.

All five things are based on God's righteousness. He always does what is right.

All five things are based on God's grace. He does these things for us because He chooses to, not because He obligated to or because we deserve it.

Some people reject the truth of predestination because they don't understand or misunderstand it.

Some people reject predestination because it clashes with their own thinking or feelings.

Some people reject predestination because it seems to make God unfair or unloving or unkind.

Isaiah 55:8-9⁸ *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*⁹ *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

1. GOD'S PREDESTINATION IN THE LIVES OF ALL PEOPLE

As Creator, God exercises the right to make people as they are and put people where they are.

Just think about the things in life that God determines by His own sovereign choice:

He determines our date of birth and time in history.

He determines where we are born and live.

He determines our parents and our siblings.

He determines our culture and nationality.

He determines our race and gender.

He determines our physical features.

We understand and accept all these things and we don't accuse God of being unfair, unloving, or unkind...at least, we shouldn't accuse Him in those ways.

Exodus 4:10-11¹⁰ *And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.*¹¹ *And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?*

2. GOD'S PREDESTINATION IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE

If we accept the Biblical teaching of God's predestination in the lives of all people, why would we ever reject God's predestination in the lives of His people?

R. C. Sproul says that he at first resisted the Biblical teaching of predestination, but God kept bringing this truth before him. Part of the process was his determination to know what the Bible taught and accept it, whatever that might be. He wrote a note to himself as a student pastor and kept it on his desk where he would always see it:

You are required to believe, to preach, and to teach what the Bible says is true, not what you want the Bible to say is true. – R. C. Sproul

That's good counsel for every person! The issue is not what does this preacher say or what does a church or denomination say. The issue is always what does the Bible say!

Sproul is right to point out that the doctrine of predestination was not invented by John Calvin. He says that Calvin did not write much on the subject, not nearly as much as Martin Luther. But regardless of that, the doctrine of predestination did not originate with Luther or Calvin, it originated with God in His Word.

What does the Bible say about predestination? Why do we pretend like it's not in the Bible?

***Ephesians 1:3-6**³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

***Ephesians 1:11** In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

What does predestination mean?

A. Predestination is personal

Notice the word "whom." Just as God foreknows, He also predestines people. Just as God's foreknowledge involves a loving relationship, predestination involves a loving relationship. Predestination is sometimes presented as a cold, hard-edged doctrine, but that is to miss the point. Predestination is part of God's loving work in salvation. It is just as much God's love to predestine us as it was for Him to send Jesus to die for us.

B. Predestination is Christ-centered

God has something specific in mind in salvation. The word "predestination" means to mark out beforehand or to preplan a destiny. God has pre-planned our destiny to make us like Christ. We are predestined to be members of Christ's family (vs. 29). He is the firstborn (preeminent in rank) of many brethren. We are predestined to be members in Christ's body. He is the head and we are His body. We are predestined to be the bride of Christ. He is the husband and we are the bride. God planned that for His people. Nothing is left to chance, and nothing is left unfinished.

C. Predestination involves a process

Predestination involves the sanctification process. God is working on us, shaping us, making us holy and more like Christ. This has to do with our character, not our physical body. We will eventually be like Christ in a physical likeness, even in our glorified body.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;* ²⁶ *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

A destiny or a destination means you are going somewhere. Everyone has an eternal destination; either we are going to heaven or hell. The Bible does not teach what some call “double predestination.” The Bible does teach the predestination of His people, and it has to do with the likeness of Christ.

D. Predestination is God's sovereign act

God is in control of foreknowing, predestining, calling, justifying, and glorifying. There is no guesswork or uncertainty. All these will be accomplished for His people. That's very comforting and reassuring. This golden chain of God's salvation is all about His sovereignty.

E. Predestination does not eliminate human responsibility

The same Bible that teaches divine sovereignty and predestination also teaches human responsibility. We are responsible to preach and teach the Gospel, share the Gospel, repent of our sins, believe and obey the Gospel.

How can we come to grips with what the Bible teaches about God's sovereignty and our responsibility in salvation? We must let God be God and focus on what He tells us to do. We are commanded to repent and believe the Gospel. That's our responsibility.

Some may reject what the Bible says, but that doesn't change the truth.

This message has been about God's predestination of His people. But what if you are not one of His people? Your destination is not heaven, but hell. You will not eternally with God, but with the devil who is your father. Your destination is settled and sealed UNLESS you repent and believe the Gospel.