

“The Doctrine of Predestination”
John 6:35-40
(Preached at Trinity, April 17, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. After the feeding of the 5000 Jesus departed but the next day the multitude came seeking Him. Upon finding Jesus He condemned them because they were seeking Him not for who He was but what He could do for them.
John 6:26 NAU - "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."
2. This began a dialogue around this subject of bread. The multitudes had their minds fixed upon physical provision while Jesus was directing their thoughts to their true need of spiritual food.
John 6:27 NAU - "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."
3. Jesus made the most profound statement to them.
John 6:35 NAU - "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."
 - A. Coming to Christ demands embracing His claims and following Him as Lord and King. Believing in Christ demands resting upon His accomplished work as our Redeemer.
 - B. Jesus was standing before them. They were seeing Him with their eyes and hearing Him with their ears. They were witnessing His miracles. Why is it they would not come to Him nor believe Him?
John 6:36 NAU - "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe."
4. The same question could be asked today. We have the infallible Word of God and the Gospel it declares. We see the testimony of the transformed lives it produces. Why is it few receive the Gospel and follow Christ? Why is it so few believe the promise of eternal life for those who trust Him alone as Savior?
Why won't they come?
The plain truth is they are not able. Jesus says in **Verse 44** they cannot come. Sin has so corrupted their heart that they are completely oblivious to their desperate need. No place is it stated clearer than in these verses. Next time we'll explore the subject of human inability.

- 5 Tonight, I want to set before you the ultimate reason anyone comes to Christ. The ultimate reason we come to Christ is because we were chosen and appointed to come. The Bible describes it in multiple passages under the term predestination. Those who come to Jesus come because they were predestined to come.
Romans 8:29-30 NAU - "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."
Ephesians 1:4-5 NAU - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,"
- 6 It is a doctrine often hotly contested and sometimes hated, but it is difficult to deny since the word is in the Bible - προορίζω - πρό = before, ὀρίζω = to determine
 It describes God's determining before the world began to save some from their sin while leaving the rest to their just condemnation.
7. Jesus is describing it in this passage.
John 6:37-39 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
- I. The doctrine of predestination is all encompassing – in other words, God has foreordained all things
- A. God's decree is universal in scope
1. 1689 LBC 3:1 – Of God's Decree – *"God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree."*
 2. Loraine Boettner wrote: "We cannot conceive of God bringing into existence a universe without a plan which would extend to all that would be done in that universe. As the Scriptures teach that God's providential control extends to all events, even the most minute, they thereby teach that His plan is equally comprehensive."¹

¹ Boettner, Loraine. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932). Page 68.

- B. The basic summary of creation is God has a plan.
1. Nothing is left to chance.
 2. Nothing is without design
 3. There is nothing more comforting than the knowledge that nothing is outside of God's sovereign dominion. Nothing is left to chance. We can trust the circumstances of our life in the safety of His hand. Our problem is we fear because we desire control.
Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV - "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
 - Rest upon His goodness and the excellence of His purpose
 - Stop overthinking the things of which you have no control
 - Look to His wisdom and trust His excellence and rest upon His direction
 - This isn't fatalism where we give ourselves over to blind fate
 - It isn't stoicism that says since you have no control over your situation just bear it
 - It is resting upon the love and mercy of God who cares for you
- C. No place is the doctrine of predestination clearer than with the salvation of God's elect.
1. God has a purpose to redeem a people for Himself. He set His love upon His elect from all eternity. He determined in eternity to send His Son to die for the elect.
2 Thessalonians 2:13 NAU - "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."
 2. All of history is the unfolding of God's redemptive purpose. Every detail is a part of God's sovereign plan.
 3. The reason one man comes to Christ while another continues in his sin is because of God's grace.
- II. The salvation of man finds its source in the Eternal Covenant of Redemption whereby God elected a multitude of fallen human beings unto salvation
- A. God's election of some unto salvation was made in the context of sin. In other words, God didn't arbitrarily determine to create some men to go to heaven while He created others to go to hell.
1. God created human beings in a condition of holiness. They were holy, but they were mutable. In other words, sin was a possibility.
 2. People have often struggled with what is called Theodicy. How can a good God who is all powerful allow the presence of evil? The answer is God didn't create evil. Evil isn't a thing. It isn't an entity. Evil is the action of the creature to sin.
 3. Satan's fall into corruption brought about a character of pure evil—but the evil was all his own. The same is true for man. God created the earth and all in it good. He declared at the end of Day six that it was "very good."

4. We cannot understand everything about God. He is incomprehensible.
- a. Couldn't God have stopped sin? If God has the ability to stop evil but does not doesn't that make Him complicit in it. The answer is simply that God is good and hates sin, but even the sinful acts of man are working for God's glory.
Genesis 50:19-20 NAU - "But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."
 Paul reminds us that God raised up Pharaoh and hardened his heart so that He might put His power on display.
Romans 9:17-18 NAS - "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."
 - b. We know God is infinitely holy. We know He hates sin. He is not the author of sin, nor does He condone evil.
 We also know, however, that some of God's attributes shine brightest in the context of sin and His redeeming grace.
 God's justice is displayed in the context of sin.
 God's wrath is displayed in the context of sin.
 Paul says the wrath of God is "revealed" in the context of unrighteousness.
 God's mercy is displayed in the context of sin.
 - c. Redemption glorifies God.
Ephesians 2:4-7 NAS - "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."
5. God created Adam as a holy creature in a holy environment and gave him a righteous law, which had he kept it he would have continued in a state of holiness. But he did not.
- a. 1689 LBC 6:1 – "*Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof, yet he did not long abide in this honor . . .*"
 - b. Adam fell from God's grace through sin, and we with him. All of us suffer under God's condemnation.
 - c. God could have justly left us in our sin and we would have suffered God's eternal condemnation in the fires of hell.

4. In God's mercy, He looked upon fallen man with pity and predestined some to be delivered from the sin and corruption.
We call it unconditional election because it was not based upon any foreseen quality in the individual that would lead God to choose him. It is totally by grace.
 5. God determined to give His elect people to His Son and that He would send His Son as their Redeemer to suffer in their place and receive them as His bride.
- B. God's eternal purpose involves a people given and a Savior sent
John 6:37-39 NAU - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. ³⁸ "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."
1. In the eternal Covenant of Redemption, God chose a multitude to be the objects of His grace, to set His love upon them and deliver them from His wrath.
 2. Predestination is the glorious display of God's mercy upon fallen sinners and God's determination to deliver them from their sin and adopt them as His own children

III. Arguments against predestination

- A. It is unfair
1. In our day we consider anything that isn't equality unfair. Everything in our existence is marked by inequality. There are tall people and short people, large and small, some are marked by great intelligence, some are athletic, some are born into poverty, others into riches. God is not obligated to treat every person with absolute equality.
 2. But God is never unjust. Regarding salvation, all will get exactly what they deserve. Some will receive perfect justice. Others will receive mercy. None are treated unjustly. God is never unfair.
 3. What does justice demand? Does not God's justice demand that we all go to hell? But God has put His mercy on display in saving some.
- B. Predestination infringes upon the free will of man
1. Predestination does not deny human responsibility. Nor does it deny the freedom of human volition. In other words, people do what they desire according to their inclination. But sin has so corrupted the will that no man left to the freedom of his will will choose God
John 6:44 NAU - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."
 2. Salvation does not take away freedom. It restores freedom. It enables a man to return to his Creator. Salvation demands that God do something powerfully upon the heart of man. We must be recreated.
2 Corinthians 5:17 – "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

C. Predestination will destroy evangelism

1. God has not only determined the salvation of His people but also the means by which they will be saved. His means is the faithful witness of the Gospel by His people.
2. If God has decreed the power of the Gospel in salvation does that not send us forth with boldness and confidence? Contrast that with the believer who has no confidence that *any* will be saved.
3. And hasn't God commanded us to go, to evangelize? Do we not desire to obey Him?

Conclusion:

1. The glorious thing about our salvation is it's all of God. As Jonah proclaimed, "Salvation *is* of the LORD." He has ordained it and accomplished it for His own glory.
2. The only cause of our salvation is God. This knowledge humbles us and fills us with gratitude and praise.
3. There is no greater confidence in the Gospel than **Verse 37**.
The Arminian sees Jesus as coming and dying for all men with no certainty that any would come. It puts us doing evangelism with no certainty that any will come. It puts Jesus depending upon the depraved will of fallen man. It leaves us without any certainty and without any hope.
4. The truth is God is accomplishing His purpose. He is saving His own.
Jesus says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me"
5. God's purpose shall not be thwarted.
William Hendriksen – "Scripture teaches a counsel that cannot be changed, a calling that cannot be revoked, an inheritance that cannot be defiled, a foundation that cannot be shaken; a seal that cannot be broken, and a life that cannot perish."²

² William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 1:235.